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Leadership that Fosters a Culture of High Achievement of African American Students

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LEADERSHIP THAT FOSTERS A CULTURE OF HIGH ACHIEVEMENT OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

by

ALEXIS Q. SMITH

(Under the Direction of Paul M. Brinson, Jr.)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the sequential, explanatory, mixed methods study was to examine leadership behaviors in the traditional theme schools and their relationship to the culture of high student achievement of African American students. The sample included teachers and principals working in five elementary traditional theme schools with predominately African American populations in one urban school district in the Southeastern United States. The quantitative component of the study was driven by the teacher survey using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) published by Hallinger. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of interviews with each school principal. The teachers' perceptions as evidenced by the survey results indicated that the principals engaged in most of the identified leadership behaviors almost always to frequently on the Likert-like scale. The principals' interviews agreed and supported the high teacher ratings. Although the sample sites were all high achieving schools, a negative correlation was evident when the highest achieving school and the lowest achieving school in reading/English/language arts and mathematics were compared relative to the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for specific dimensions of the PIMRS. The principals' interview transcripts were consistent with the higher teacher ratings in the lowest achieving schools thereby supporting the negative correlation.

Further understanding of the relationship between leadership and student achievement for

this population of students will benefit policy makers, educational practitioners, and the

body of educational research because the closing achievement gaps of African American

students is of crucial interest in the age of accountability.

INDEX WORDS: African American students, Student achievement, Achievement gaps, Leadership theory, Leadership behaviors, Instructional leadership, Critical race theory, School choice, Effective schools, Culturally relevant leadership

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DEDICATION

I give all honor and glory to my Heavenly Father and Lord, Jesus Christ because without divine guidance and direction, this would have not been possible. I dedicate this dissertation to my family who always supported my personal and professional goals. My parents, Orlando C. Smith and Martha F. Smith believed in me and encouraged me every step of the way. My sister, brother-in-law, and nephew, Derexa, Larry, and Brandon Grindatti who always advocated for me. Thank you for your everlasting patience and your unconditional love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to Paige and Witty (2010) the history of African Americans in the United States follows a path from slavery to racial equality and social justice. There have been numerous legal, social, and economic barriers along that journey, barriers which were often enforced by custom or even terrorism. Even these formidable obstructions did not discourage a determined people with authentic leadership. Unfortunately, today a more subtle obstacle exists that threatens to impede the future progress of African Americans in the United States. The most persistent challenge for today's educators and educational institutions is the achievement gap that exists between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts. This gap is most often illustrated by standardized test scores, but it is also evidenced by graduation rates, college enrollment percentages, college graduation statistics, and employment comparisons (Carter, Hawkins, & Natesan, 2008).

In a recent report from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (2010), test score reports were released for the state of Georgia's students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), and the Advanced Placement tests (AP). The score reports indicated a continuing achievement gap on all three tests between African American and Caucasian students. An analysis of achievement gaps during the past four years revealed minimal progress. While some gaps narrowed slightly, others widened by an equally small degree (Excellence Gap State Profiles: Georgia, 2010). Paige and Witty (2010) suggested that

unlike slavery, segregation, and discrimination, this gap has no legal or social mandate. They stated that the failure begins in elementary and continues through secondary school resulting in an educational level that precludes students from future academic success and relegates them to a future of lifetime financial strain. Burke (2009) and Saban (2007) reported that having a college degree is a major factor in the determination of economic mobility.

Although the difference in achievement has existed for years, there has been no widespread public move to eradicate it. According to Howard (2010), there have been numerous surveys, questionnaires, and studies; however, few results to narrow the achievement gap have been realized. Murphy (2009) stated that these gaps have detrimental consequences throughout the lives of African Americans. These consequences have been evident when examining drop out rates, graduation rates, educational attainment, and income levels. "Achievement gaps have important consequences for both individuals and the nation. They damage the economic and social fabric of society, undermine civil rights and social justice for a large segment of the population, and destroy the principles of democracy" (Murphy, 2009, p. 12). For all of these reasons, Paige and Witty have characterized achievement gaps as the greatest civil rights challenge in the United States today.

School districts and schools have concentrated their efforts to improve student achievement to narrow or eliminate achievement gaps in three general areas. Some have relied on effective leadership, others have used professional development for teachers, and many schools have sought to enhance the parent/community involvement component of their schools to improve student learning. The relationship between the attributes of

effective principals and their influence on student achievement has been chronicled by

Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Myerson (2005). They contended that school

leaders affect student achievement by supporting and developing effective teachers and

by implementing effective organizational processes. They also explain that successful

principals possess knowledge, skills, and dispositions characteristic of effective school

leaders that include the knowledge to develop people, the skills to set organizational

direction, and the ability to transform the organization into a productive, collaborative,

and powerful teaching institution for all students.

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) described effective school leadership as a

common repertoire of practices. They explained that effective leaders build vision and

set direction for the school. They claimed that it is essential for leaders to share this

vision and direction with the school staff and stakeholders. Effective leaders also

understand and develop people by leading teachers to take ownership for their own

professional learning and enhancement. Successful principals know how to redesign or

transform the organization to be more collaborative and more effective in improving

student achievement. Principals also manage the teaching and learning environment by

diagnosing and assessing student progress, as well as designing strategies to meet the

unique needs of students. Research suggests that these practices have been effective in a

variety of contexts in turnaround schools and schools with diverse student populations

(Leithwood, 2009).

Likewise, closely related to the four defined areas of effective school leadership

presented by Leithwood et al. (2008) is the theoretical framework underlying the

Principal Instructional Management Inventory Scale (PIMRS). This framework designed

by Hallinger (1985) categorizes principal leadership behaviors in three dimensions. The dimensions are (a) defining the school mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) developing the school learning climate. The dimensions are further delineated into ten subscales that name specific leadership functions. These include (a) frames the school's goals, (b) communicates the school's goals, (c) coordinates the curriculum, (d) supervises and evaluates instruction, (e) monitors student progress, (f) protects instructional time, (g) provides incentives for teachers, (h) provides incentives for learning, (i) promotes professional development, and (j) maintains high visibility. These ten subscales grouped with the three dimensions of leadership behaviors became the basis of the theoretical framework of the study.

These leadership behaviors or functions were the focus of this study. It examined leadership behaviors according to teachers' perceptions and the principals' perspectives to determine how the schools' leadership facilitates and sustains the culture of high academic achievement at the sample schools. Specific areas of concern included the defining of the school mission and goals, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate. These three leadership categories mirror the dimensions on the PIMRS. The researcher has determined the nature of the relationship among leadership behaviors as measured by the PIMRS and culture of high student achievement in these selected schools as measured by the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). The CRCT is the state-mandated accountability test for Georgia. It is used as a partial requirement for the attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for elementary and middle schools. It is a criterion-referenced test designed to measure the students' proficiency on the Georgia Performance Standards

(GPS) which comprise the state adopted curriculum. The CRCT scores that were examined to determine evidence of high student achievement were reading, English/language arts, and mathematics scores posted for the school years 2004-2005 through 2009-2010 for students in grades one through eight and scores for 2010-2011 for grades three through eight only. The CRCT scores for school year 2010-2011 indicated that Georgia did not test first and second grades that school year.

In order to examine achievement gaps and consider a potential solution to narrow or eliminate gaps for African American students in an authentic educational setting, the researcher has chosen to study five traditional theme schools that have demonstrated remarkable success in eliminating the achievement gap that exists between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts. The schools are located in a large, urban school system in the Southeastern United States and consist of predominately African American students who have voluntarily enrolled in the system's traditional theme schools. The school district has an enrollment of 98,691 students with 69% African American, 13% Hispanic, 11% Caucasian, 6% Asian, 1.5% Multiracial, and .2% American Indian. Of the school district's 137 schools, 91 of those are Title I schools and 69% of the student population comes from economically disadvantaged homes as evidenced by the eligibility for free/reduced meals. English Learners (EL) comprise 11.5% of the school population and students with disabilities (SWD) total 8.5% of the student body.

The traditional theme schools are public school choice elementary school institutions that serve Pre-K through fifth grade students. The schools adopted many best practices advocated by educator Marva Collins including parent choice, inclusion

classrooms, tutorials for struggling students, required parental volunteer service, and school uniforms (Collins & Tamarkin 1982). Throughout the years since the traditional theme schools were introduced (1996-2006), the academic achievement data as evidenced by state-mandated standardized test scores have indicated higher achievement levels in the traditional theme schools than their neighborhood feeder schools. Additionally, the achievement in these schools meets and/or exceeds schools with predominately Caucasian populations, thereby successfully addressing district achievement gaps evident in the neighborhood feeder school and predominately Caucasian schools throughout the state. This student achievement data were based on the percent of students who met and/or exceeded the standard on the reading, English/language arts, and mathematics sections of the Criterion Referenced-Competency Test (CRCT). This is part of the state mandated testing program for the partial determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Table 1 indicates that the percent of third grade students in four of the five traditional theme school met/exceeded the percent of third grade students meeting the standard in the state in all three subject area tests (Reading, ELA, and Mathematics) on the CRCT administered in 2011. All of the traditional theme schools' third grade students exceeded the percent of students in the school district meeting/exceeding the standards in all three subject area tests on the CRCT administered in 2011. Table 2 illustrates that the five traditional theme schools' fifth grade students met/exceeded the district and the state in all three subject area tests on the CRCT administered in 2011.

Table 1

Percent of Third Grade Students Met/Exceeded the Standard (CRCT 2011)

Subject	State	DistrictS#1	S#2	S#3	S#4	S#5
Reading	90	83	89	96	95	98	96
Eng/Lang Arts	89	78	88	91	95	94	92
Mathematics	81	67	80	86	81	85	85

Table 2

Percent of Fifth Grade Students Met/Exceeded the Standard (CRCT 2011)

Subject	State	DistrictS#1	S#2	S#3	S#4	S#5
Reading	90	85	95	95	95	97	95
Eng/Lang Arts	94	86	96	97	97	97	97
Mathematics	87	76	87	90	94	94	93

The Statement of the Problem

Achievement gaps plague America's public educational system. An examination of standardized tests, graduation rates, and college completion data indicates that minority students, with the exception of Asians, demonstrate much less academic success in school as compared with their Caucasian counterparts. As a result, minority students have less income potential, greater likelihood of being incarcerated, and are at greater risk for serious health problems due to lack of affordable health care. The achievement

gap in America's schools lead to life-long problems and is characterized as being the greatest civil rights challenge of present times. It is apparent that the Eurocentric public schools are not meeting the needs of all students, especially African Americans. The values and norms transmitted by the public school curriculum and instructional program do not reflect a strong multicultural focus that is advantageous in meeting the learning needs of a diverse student population.

Educational initiatives focused on effective leadership, best instructional practices, and increased parental and community involvement have been explored to increase student achievement. These efforts have been met with sporadic and short-term successes. The traditional theme schools are an initiative that implements a collaboration of effective leadership, innovative instructional design, and required parental involvement to provide an educational opportunity that addresses students' needs to maximize student learning. Considering the available research, numerous studies, and volumes of writing that have addressed achievement gaps in the African American student population, none have focused on the behaviors and practices of the leaders of these particular schools. The purpose of this sequential, explanatory, mixed methods study is to examine leadership behaviors and practices that foster high achievement in traditional theme schools. By examining leadership behaviors and practices in three research-based dimensions of (a) defining the school mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) developing the school learning climate, the nature and strength of the relationship between the leadership behaviors and high student achievement has been ascertained.

Research Questions

The researcher examined teachers' perceptions of effective leadership behaviors and their relationship with high academic achievement of African American students using a quantitative approach. Additionally, principals' perceptions of effective leadership behaviors have been explored following a qualitative design. The overarching question that guided this study was: What leadership behaviors and practices facilitate and sustain a culture of high academic achievement for African American students in the traditional theme schools? In addition, the following sub-questions supported the overarching question:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to defining the school mission and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the leadership behaviors and practices relative to managing the instructional program and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school?

3. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to developing the school learning climate and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school?

4. What principal behaviors and practices are instrumental in defining the mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate in the traditional theme schools?

The Significance of the Study

The most effective change in educational practice may require changes in educational policy. To meet the diverse needs of a variety of students, school districts have created various special purpose schools. These schools have historically been magnet schools, theme schools, and/or charter schools. To address the recent controversy surrounding the creation and financing of charter schools, the Georgia Supreme Court ruled that the Georgia Charter Commission could grant charters for special purpose schools that received their funding from the state. The commission could not grant charters for schools that would require school district money to fund the schools (Gwinnett County School Dist. et al. v. Cox et al. 2011). The impetus for the surge in special purpose schools, particularly the charter schools, was parents and communities looking for improved educational opportunities for children. The Georgia Supreme Court decision coupled together with the policies enacted by the local school districts will determine the future of charter schools. Going forward, charter schools, whether conversion or start up, could provide a more equitable educational opportunity for African American students that could eliminate achievement gaps as have the traditional theme schools.

In addition to the implications for educational policy, this study has added to the body of research in the area of leadership practices that addresses achievement gaps of African American students. Although there is a substantial body of research available to educators addressing the challenge of narrowing achievement gaps, this study has examined the relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement as demonstrated by a public school choice alternative, the traditional theme schools. This

study is unique because the schools represent authentic educational settings that have yielded marked student achievement results over a 15-year period. The leadership behaviors and educational practices of the traditional theme schools could be implemented by other schools and school systems in an effort to eradicate the achievement gaps. Using this research as a catalyst, leaders could make a formidable improvement in the educational practice that could help level the playing field for African American students.

This study is important to policy, research, and educational practice. This study has direct implications for policy for special purpose schools such as charter schools, magnet schools, theme schools, and neighborhood schools with indigenous themes. It adds to the body of educational research on the elimination of achievement gaps by examining the nature and relationship of leadership behaviors in fostering a culture of high academic achievement for African American students. The study directly applies to the practice of school leaders in schools serving African American students who strive for high student achievement.

The researcher has extensive experience in African American educational challenges and opportunities from a teacher's perspective, building leadership perspective, and district office perspective. With that professional background and vested personal interest, the researcher is committed to discovering the keys of success that building leaders use to unlock the sustenance of the culture of high student achievement in the traditional theme schools. The researcher has selected a school system that encourages relevant research that aligns with the district's mission and goals. Because this research concentrated on one of the district's most successful educational

initiatives, the researcher received full cooperation from the district, schools, leaders, and teachers.

Procedures

The study is a sequential, explanatory, mixed methods design with a quantitative first phase and a qualitative second phase. The emphasis is on the quantitative part with the qualitative section adding depth and specificity to the findings of the quantitative section. Leadership theory drove the quantitative phase and the interviews formulated the qualitative inquiry portion of the study. The quantitative portion of the study involved administering the Principals' Inventory Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to teachers currently on staff at one of the five traditional theme schools. This was administered as an anonymous survey by the researcher and a designated member of the staff without the principal's presence during the administration. The PIMRS contains 50 questions that are answered on a five-point Likert-like scale ranging from almost always to almost never. It was selected and administered without modification with written permission from the author and holder of the copyright. The survey results indicated the teachers' perceptions of the nature and frequency of the principals' leadership behaviors. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of interviews with the principals that explored examples of leadership behaviors specific to the 10 leadership subscales of the PIMRS. The principals' leadership behaviors were the independent variables and African American student achievement as evidenced by state-mandated test scores, was the dependent variable.

The sample schools are all traditional theme schools in a large, urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The schools are elementary

schools serving students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. The traditional theme schools educate predominately African American students. The percentages of African American students in the traditional theme schools range from 93.9% to 98.7 % of the student populations.

The quantitative data were analyzed for descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, range, and standard deviation. The researcher conducted a Chi-Square test for independence using cross tabulations to consider the PIMRS ratings in the three dimensions in the schools with the highest and lowest academic achievement and whether or not they were independent or related to one another. Immediately following the Chi-square, the researcher performed a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis to determine the nature and strength of the variables. The qualitative component of the study involved the transcription of the principal interviews, coding, and the determination of common themes. These findings added detail and depth to the quantitative results.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

The limitation of this study is the methodology. The methodology is a sequential, explanatory, mixed methods study that collected survey data from teachers for the first phase of the study. These data consisted of teachers' perceptions of the current principals' leadership behaviors. Because it is perceptual data, it may not be entirely objective. The qualitative phase of the study consisted of the principals' perspectives of their own leadership behaviors as discussed in an interview. Because the data are self-reported by the principals, some bias may be present.   The sample of the study was certified employees who completed the survey and the current principals who were interviewed. The researcher made every effort to schedule the data collection at times

that maximized participation. However, it is doubtful that all teacher participants were available to be included in the study. Scheduling accommodations were made to ensure that all principals were able to be interviewed. Because the sample was five traditional theme schools with unique organizational characteristics, this study may not be generalizable to other public elementary schools.

The delimitations of the study are the survey instrument and the population that the researcher has selected. The survey instrument is divided into three dimensions of leadership: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate program. Although leadership behaviors can be categorized and characterized in many different ways, the researcher has chosen to use a survey instrument that delineates leadership behaviors and functions in these three domains and 10 related subscales. The researcher has also chosen to base the study in one large, urban school district located in the Southeastern region of the United States because this school system has evidenced high student achievement in its predominately African American traditional theme schools.

It is assumed that the participants were open and honest with their answers to the survey and interview questions. Another assumption of the study is that the PIMRS instrument actually measures what it purports to measure, which is teacher perceptions of leadership behaviors. It was also assumed that the researcher had access to the teacher and principal participants for the data collection portion of the study.

Definition of Terms

Academic Achievement – For the purposes of this study, academic achievement will be determined by the annual results of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test

(CRCT) administered in April to public school students in grades one through eight. This test is designed to measure each student's proficiency on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in reading, English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

Achievement Gaps – In this study achievement gaps or differences between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts will be discussed. The gaps will be evidenced by standardized test scores, particularly the CRCT.

Communicating the School's Goals – For the purposes of this study, this includes formal and informal channels that the principal uses to make students, parents, and teachers familiar with the most important school goals. This is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Coordinating the Curriculum - For the purposes of this study, coordinating the curriculum is the leadership that the principal provides to assure that alignment among the curricular objectives, classroom content, and achievement testing exists with continuity across grade levels. Coordinating the curriculum is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Framing the School's Goals - For the purposes of this study, framing the school's goals refers to the principal's role in determining the areas that the school will focus its resources during a given school year. Framing the school's goals is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Leadership Behaviors – The leadership behaviors for this study are framed by the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) published by Hallinger. The dimensions of leadership are defining the school mission,

managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate.

Maintaining Visibility - For the purposes of this study, maintaining visibility is the time that the principal invests on campus and in classrooms interacting with students and teachers. Maintaining visibility is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Marva Collins – The schools in this study were developed with the philosophy and practices developed by Marva Collins in the Westside Preparatory School founded in Chicago, Illinois in 1975. Collins offered a classical education to economically disadvantaged students and those having troubled school records. Her high standards, strong beliefs in the students' potential, and a strict code of conduct resulted in high academic achievement levels for her students.

Monitoring Student Progress - For the purposes of this study, monitoring student progress is furnishing teachers with test results, discussing those results, and providing an analysis of the results for teachers to diagnose programmatic and student strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring student progress is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Promoting Professional Development - For the purposes of this study, promoting professional development is encouraging, arranging, providing, informing, and supporting teachers with relevant staff development opportunities that are closely linked with the school's goals. Promoting professional development is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Protecting Instructional Time - For the purposes of this study, protecting instructional time is providing the teachers with uninterrupted blocks of instructional time and

developing policies related to the interruption of classroom learning time. Protecting instructional time is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Providing Incentives for Learning - For the purposes of this study, providing incentives for learning is the provisions that the principals make to provide students frequent opportunities to be publicly rewarded and recognized for academic achievement and improvement. Providing incentives for learning is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Providing Incentives for Teachers - For the purposes of this study, providing incentives for teachers is formal and informal ways that the principal praises and publicly recognizes teachers. Monetary rewards, although limited under the principal's authority, may also be included. Providing incentives for teachers is a subscale of the PIMRS that measures a specific instructional leadership function.

Public School Choice – The traditional theme schools in this study are part of a public school choice initiative offered to parents in a large, urban school district in the Southeastern region of the United States. The only enrollment requirement is residency in an attendance zone of one of the elementary schools in a geographical cluster.

Traditional Theme School – The traditional theme schools in the identified school district are public schools that are part of a choice initiative. They are based on the educational philosophy and practices of Marva Collins and the student population mirrors the school community demographics.

Westside Preparatory School – This school was founded in 1975 in Chicago, Illinois by

Marva Collins. It offered economically disadvantaged students and those with

troubled school records a classical education with high expectations and strict

conduct standards for students. The school operated for more than 30 years and

documented outstanding student achievement results.

Chapter Summary

The focus of this study is to examine an effective intervention that has been

successful in eliminating the achievement gap for African American students. One of the

most persistent problems in public schools is achievement gaps particularly between

African American students and their Caucasian counterparts. Because academic success

in school is linked to successful completion of higher education, income potential, and

general health and well-being, achievement gaps are a life-long problem for African

Americans. Various educational initiatives have been implemented and met with

sporadic and limited success in an effort to close the achievement gap. The study will be

limited to five public schools that are part of a local school district's choice offerings.

These schools have demonstrated marked academic success during the past fifteen years.

The researcher explored the leadership behaviors of the principals that foster a culture of

high academic achievement for African American students. Data collection consisted of

teacher perceptions and principals' perspectives and was obtained using a survey

instrument and principal interviews. This is a sequential, explanatory, mixed methods

study. A purposeful sampling process was used to select teachers and principals to

participate in the study. The quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive and

inferential statistics and the qualitative data were analyzed for significant statements,

general themes, and support and explanatory data that added greater depth and

understanding to the quantitative findings. The researcher offered educational leaders

and practitioners information that may be transferable to other school settings to address

African American student achievement and the eradication of achievement gaps between

minority students and their Caucasian counterparts.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To provide a meaningful context for this study, several aspects have been discussed to further illuminate the problem of student achievement gaps when African American students are compared with their Caucasian counterparts. A historical account of African American student achievement gaps has been presented. School leadership behaviors and practices that have been linked to high student achievement, particularly in minority populations, have been examined. Public school choice models have been explored as potential and proven educational institutions that have been implemented to better meet the needs of African American students. Finally, the history and hallmarks of the traditional theme school initiative have been characterized in terms of leadership and its relationship to academic achievement.

African American Student Achievement Gaps

In order to examine the history of achievement gaps of African American students, Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides an explanation for the severity and persistence of the problem. CRT originated among legal scholars in the 1970s. It explains the law and how it is applied along the lines of race. Early CRT theorists Bell, Freeman, and Delgado wrote about CRT to offer new strategies to combat subtle forms of racism that were common after the civil rights movement. They based their works on the five major tenets of CRT. They are (a) racism is normal, not aberrant in American society, (2) White-on-color ascendancy serves important psychic and material purposes, (3) race is a social construct, (4) people have potentially conflicting and overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances, and (5) minority status has an assumed competence

to speak about race and racism. In short, groups that hold power use every means to maintain and extend that power structure (Burke, 2009; Lindsay, 2011).

Approaching achievement gaps with a colorblind mindset only masks the power and ugliness of racism in American society that is mirrored in public schools. Avoiding the issues through colorblind eyes allows for the continued subordination of African American students. On the other hand, Howard (2010) suggested that CRT places the institution of racism front and center where educators and theorists can work to dismantle the racist constructs that contribute to the inferior academic achievement evidenced by African American students. A prime example of this is a study conducted by Carter (2008) that examined students' racial identities and awareness of racism. She interviewed African American students from nine urban high schools who expressed the aspiration of becoming teachers in urban settings. The study concluded that having positive feelings about one's racial group and having strong feelings of connectedness to one's racial heritage can be instrumental in supporting academic achievement among African American students. Most high achieving, many average achieving, and some low achieving students reported that critical race consciousness facilitated their motivation to persist in school and to pursue ambitious life goals.

CRT was a difficult concept for many Americans to accept. People wanted to think that the advances of the civil rights movement brought about political, social, and economic progress with less division between the majority and minority populations. One of the earliest documented studies that explored the achievement gaps between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts in the context of the civil rights movement was the Coleman Report officially titled The Equality of Educational

Opportunity study. This study was commissioned by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to examine the effects of desegregation on student achievement. Coleman examined (a) the extent that racial and ethnic groups were segregated from one another in public schools, (b) whether the schools offered equal educational opportunities according to a criterion of quality indicators, (c) how much students learned as measured by standardized achievement tests, and (d) the relationship between students' achievement and the kinds of schools they attended. It was expected that the Coleman Report would link the achievement differences to unequal facilities, materials, and resources. However, the study found that the greatest influence on student achievement for Black and White students was the educational level of the parents which was defined as family background. The most surprising conclusion was that a minimal difference in student achievement was attributed to the effects of school staff and facilities. Improving the qualities of the school would do little to narrow the achievement gap (Coleman, 1966). Coleman's conclusions were controversial and left educational theorists and practitioners challenged on how to narrow achievement gaps in public schools.

Interestingly, the next year Blau and Duncan (1967) published their results from a cross-generational study exploring social and occupational mobility. They examined several variables including cognitive ability, socio-economic status, race, and education. They found that investments in education were the most powerful predictors of upward mobility.

Widespread skepticism still existed among the educational community as to the effects of schooling and the effect of a particular school on the outcome of a child. In the shadow of the Coleman Report, a study of 12 London secondary schools was conducted.

Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, and Smith (1979) were concerned that students

spent 15,000 hours in school and there should be some tangible effects of the amount of

time spent in school on a child's development. They also explored if it mattered what

school a child attended, and if factors such as school organization or school functioning

made a difference in student outcomes. Among the most powerful of their findings was

that the differences in school outcomes were related to the degree of academic emphasis

of the school, the teacher actions in lessons, the availability of awards and incentives,

good conditions for pupils, and the extent to which children were able to take

responsibility. These were all factors that the school staff could modify and were not

under external control. They also found that the combined and cumulative effects of the

individual process variables had a greater effect on student outcomes than any single

variable. This was because the factors worked together to alter the ethos, or the set of

values, attitudes, and behaviors that became characteristic of the school as a whole. And

finally, they concluded that the findings indicated a strong probability that the

relationship between school process and student outcomes was of a causal nature and that

schools can do a great deal, even in disadvantaged areas, to be a force for good (Rutter et

al., 1979).

      The effect of schooling on the outcome of students was the focus of a study

conducted by Saban (2007). He examined three father-son dyads to determine the role of

a Bachelor's Degree on attaining middle class status. Saban's subjects included an

African American father and son, a Cuban American father and son, and a Caucasian

father and son. The study concentrated on the fathers' work ethic as the sons' motivation

for attaining a Bachelor's Degree, the value of the degree in attaining the American

dream, the value of the degree in the quest for a better life, and the nature and the role of

the sons' support and encouragement. In the three father-son dyads, the work ethic

displayed by the fathers was the strongest motivational influence over the sons. This

influence overshadowed all other negative factors and obstacles reported by the sons.

The fathers also stressed that earning a college degree was absolutely essential to achieve

middle class status in present times. The fathers and sons agreed that education and the

attainment of a college degree was instrumental in seeking a better life. The three sons

reported a network of encouragement and support, some passive, some overt, but always

persistent from their fathers. This study illuminated the powerful effect of education,

particularly a Bachelor's degree, in the attainment of middle class status.

During the past three decades, schools and educators have continued to strive to

improve the quality of education with a particular concern with narrowing or eliminating

achievement gaps. One of the more recent works was documented by Leithwood (2010)

who examined a group of 31 school districts that had been successful in closing student

achievement gaps among diverse students in challenging circumstances. He identified 10

characteristics that were shared among the targeted school districts. The most frequently

reported characteristics were (a) job-embedded professional development for leaders and

teachers, (b) investment in instructional leadership through continuing education

opportunities, (c) the use of evidence for planning, organizational learning, and

accountability, (d) a district-wide focus on student achievement, (e) strategic approaches

to curriculum and instruction, (f) building and maintaining good communication,

relationships, learning communities, and district culture, (g) an infrastructure alignment

in financial allocations, personnel policies and procedures, and organizational structures,

(h) a targeted and phased orientation to school, (i) strategic engagement with the government's agenda for change and associated resources, and (j) a district-wide sense of efficacy.

Similarly, Murphy (2009) offered some observations and cautions for today's educational practitioners. According to Murphy, closing the achievement gap means improving the learning of the targeted group or groups at a faster rate than for the other students. Prevention at an early grade level is always preferable to remediation at a high grade level. The length of time that the students are in the gap-closing treatment is important. Many treatments take time but the effects build the longer the treatment is applied. It is also essential that after the improvement in student achievement has been realized, the treatment not be withdrawn because the same treatment will be required to maintain the gain in achievement. Finally, Murphy reminded educators that, although most achievement gaps address disaggregated groups, student achievement is improved one student at a time.

Leaders of predominately African American schools that address and employ strategies to eliminate achievement gaps report being faced with oppositional beliefs and attitudes from some African American students. Students are reluctant to pursue academic excellence and are often underachievers. Tatum (1997) explained how African American students grow and progress in school with respect to developing a racial self image. In her discussion of the five stages of racial identity she described how Black students feel that they have to become *raceless* in a culturally white school setting in order to be high achievers. Ogbu (1993) developed a theory of Cultural Ecological (CE) Theory of Minority Performance. He explained that most Black student populations are

involuntary immigrants because their forefathers came to this country by force rather than by choice. He tracked academic achievement between Black school populations that were involuntary immigrants with Black school populations that were voluntary immigrants, and found that the voluntary immigrant populations were usually the high achievers. Ogbu was careful to separate his ideas from the cultural deprivation theorists because he believed that the CE theory was not inherent in Black youth but rather an adaptation to their hostile cultural/ecological niche (Foley, 2004).

Nevertheless, other educators and researchers did not agree with Ogbu's Cultural Ecological Theory. Berlowitz, Hutchins, Jenkins, Mussman, and Schneider (2006) referred to the phenomena as the Oppositional Culture Theory and insisted that it was grounded in the old cultural deprivation and victim-blaming school of thought. They offered that achievement gaps have more to do with the subtle racism found in schools such as acts of talking down to, dismissing, ignoring, and disregarding, which they termed micro-aggressions. They centered their explanation of achievement gaps in the Critical Race Theory, which explains the achievement gaps in terms of political, social, and economic structures in American society that are reflected in the public school system.

Also exploring the validity of oppositional culture, Lundy and Firebough (2005) reviewed the results of the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) published in 1998 to determine if race and/or gender accounted for differences in school achievement. In order to support or refute the oppositional culture theory, they specifically examined the findings for peer relations and school resistance. They found no support for the thesis that race or ethnicity affected differences in school achievement. They did find that

gender difference appeared to have an effect on male students' tendency to earn lower

grades than female students, even though they had equal or higher standardized test

scores than the female students. Their findings suggest that if there is an oppositional

cultural phenomenon present, it may be related to gender rather than race.

A similar longitudinal study was evaluated for oppositional culture among a

group of adolescents. Harris (2006) considered the results of students in the seventh,

eighth, and eleventh grades from the Maryland Adolescence Development In Context

Study (MADICS). He reported findings related to five hypotheses. First, he found no

support for Black students perceiving fewer returns from education than White students.

Specifically, Black students reported greater returns from education and had higher

educational aspirations than White students in this study. Secondly, he reported that the

study indicated that Black students had a greater affect for school (liking of school and

school activities) than the White students in the study. The third hypothesis that he

examined was that Black children exhibit greater resistance to school than White

children. He studied data that indicated that Black students seek help more and spend

about the same time on homework and school activities as White students. Next, he

sought to determine if high-achieving Black students were negatively sanctioned by their

peers to a greater degree than high-achieving White students. To test this hypothesis,

Harris looked at the indicators *ability to make friends* and *getting along with other kids*

and the findings were the same for both groups; therefore the *acting white* syndrome was

not supported. Finally Harris explored to find if Black students had a greater counter-

educational culture than White students. This was also not supported in the survey data.

In conclusion, the five major tenets of the oppositional culture theory were not supported

by this study. Harris offered that based on the findings of this study, oppositional culture as an explanation of achievement differences appeared to be limited. He stated that evidence suggested that Black students want to learn, but they are not acquiring the skills necessary for academic success.

Leadership Behaviors and Practices That Foster Student Achievement

Leadership behaviors and functions have been explored as an avenue to improve student achievement and narrow student achievement gaps. As early as the 1970's, Edmonds (1979) promoted effective schools for the urban poor. His research focused on effective schools and their principals' leadership skills. He found that high achieving schools (a) had strong, instructional leadership, (b) were characterized by a climate of expectation where no student is permitted to fail, (c) maintained an orderly and safe environment, (d) emphasized basic skills acquisition, and (e) monitored student progress. Further he found that high achieving schools had principals who offered more support to teachers than principals in low achieving schools. Teachers at high achieving schools also rated the support services that came from district administration higher than teachers at low achieving schools. He also examined improving schools and declining schools and found that improving schools had principals that were much more likely to be instructional leaders, to take on the role of a disciplinarian, and to assume the responsibility for evaluation of basic student achievement than the leaders of declining schools.

Similar to the Edmonds essential elements of effective schools, Lezotte (1991) explained the correlates of effective schools in terms of the first and second generation correlates for effective schools. He stated that school improvement was a continual

process and the transition between the first generation and the second generation moves a school closer to learning for all. The correlates included (a) a safe, orderly environment, (b) a climate of high expectations, (c) instructional leadership, (d) a clear and focused mission, (e) opportunity to learn and time on task, (f) frequent monitoring of student progress, and (g) good home-school relations. As the correlates moved from one generation to the next, the safe, orderly environment became a school environment where students and teachers are collaborative and cooperative with substantial commitment to the teaching and learning process. The climate of high expectations evolved into a climate that helped individual students maximize their success through re-teaching and regrouping strategies. The role of the principal as the instructional leader evolved into the principal as the one who created a community of shared values. The principal became the leader of leaders, a skills coach, partner, and cheerleader. He/she mastered distributed leadership. A clear and focused mission became an educational path that struck a balance between basic prerequisite skills and high level learning. The teaching and learning was delivered with the end in mind to meet accountability standards. The time on task correlate took on a new balancing act that prioritized learning that was most valuable and practiced organized abandonment for less important content. Frequent monitoring of student progress reflected new and innovative uses of technology. There was more emphasis on criterion-referenced testing, authentic assessments, product and portfolio evaluation, and alignment among the written, taught, and tested curriculum. Home-school relations required that parents and schools formed authentic partnerships based on trust and effective communication (Lezotte, 2009).

As a follow-up study of the effective schools movement, Sadker and Zittleman

(2009) investigated the five factors of effective schools which were (a) strong leadership, (b) clear, focused mission, (c) safe and orderly climate, (d) monitoring student progress, and (e) high expectations. The researchers conducted a case study of a high achieving school and a low achieving school to determine the degree and nature of the five effective school factors in each school. The study revealed that the high achieving school had a strong implementation of the five effective school factors and had some additional practices that administrators reported as instrumental to their success. The high achieving school advocated an early start for school children including programs that help parents teach their children at home from birth to three years of age. The school estimated that for every dollar that the school district spent on early childhood education, approximately seven dollars in remedial services were saved. The school encouraged an emphasis on reading and math because they found that children who were behind in those subjects by the first grade only had a one in eight chance of catching up with their grade level peers. The researchers also stated that students in smaller schools or attending schools organized into smaller units were more likely to pass their courses, less prone to resort to violence, and more likely to attend college, than students who were enrolled in large schools. Smaller class sizes were reported in this study to be associated with increased student learning, especially in the early grades. Also increased length of school days, longer school years, and more efficient use of school time was associated with increased student performance. The greatest advantage with increased instructional time is in how effectively the time is spent. Teacher training was also reported to be associated with increased student learning. Students who were taught by teachers who had strong skills and qualifications performed better than students who were taught by

teachers who were unqualified and uncertified. Finally, the study reported that a trusting

relationship among the principal, teachers, students and parents was advantageous in

improving schools. As trust levels increased, so did student achievement.

To examine the body of research on specific principal behaviors, functions, and

responsibilities that positively affected student achievement, a meta-analysis was

conducted and reported by Waters, Marzano, McNulty (2003). An examination of 21

leadership responsibilities found a positive relationship to student achievement that

equated to an approximate increase of 10 percentile points or raising a 50th percentile

ranking to a 60th percentile ranking on a norm-referenced mean test score. Four

leadership responsibilities had the strongest relationship to student achievement. The

first was situational awareness, which was explained as being aware of undercurrents and

potential problems and proactively addressing them. Intellectual stimulation was another

leadership responsibility that reported a positive relationship to student achievement.

Intellectual stimulation was characterized as providing information for the staff on

current research, theories, and practices. Input had the strongest positive relationship to

student achievement; this was defined as allowing teachers to be actively involved in

decision-making for practices and policies. The responsibility of being a change agent

was described as being willing to lead away from the status quo. From these results

leadership behaviors were grouped into four classifications: experiential knowledge,

declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and contextual knowledge. Experiential

knowledge is the part of the knowledge taxonomy that is *why* things are important.

Declarative knowledge is *knowing what to do*. Procedural knowledge is *knowing how to

do it,* and contextual knowledge is *knowing when to do it*. This knowledge taxonomy and

the 21 leadership responsibilities formed a balanced leadership framework that provided the research base for how the principal positively impacted student achievement.

Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) explained that the leadership role of the principal has shifted from manager to instructional leader. They outlined the role of the school principal as including three core leadership practices: developing people involved enabling teachers and other staff to do their jobs effectively by offering intellectual support, stimulation, and models of support; setting the direction for the organization consisted of developing shared goals, monitoring performance and promoting effective communication; and redesigning the organization included creating a productive school culture that modified unproductive structures and built the collaborative process. They also reported that there were three important aspects of a principal's job. First, principals must develop a deep understanding of how to support teachers. Secondly, principals must manage the curriculum to promote student learning and finally, they must develop the ability to transform schools into effective organizations that offer powerful teaching and learning for all students.

In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation to examine the traits of effective school principals, it was found that high student achievement was associated with collective leadership (Samuels, 2010). The report detailed the role of successful principals in setting the conditions that enabled teachers to be good instructors. The findings also explain that effective principals were able to use data and show teachers how to use data too. The report also cautioned that principal turnover or rotation could be counter-productive to student achievement due to a moderately negative effect when principals are reassigned every three or four years.

The examination of effective leadership in schools as it promotes improved

student achievement has also been studied in the context of leader efficacy. Leithwood

and Jantzi (2008) studied the effects of leader efficacy from a school district and a local

school context. They found that district leadership effects are indirect but help to create

conditions that school leaders believe are favorable to enhance and support their work.

For school leaders, they reported a weak but significant effect of leader efficacy to the

proportion of students who were able to meet or exceed the state's proficiency level.

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) conducted a literature review about

successful school leadership. In an analysis of several empirical studies, they made seven

claims about leadership and successful schools and students. First, they said that

leadership was second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning.

They attributed this relationship to leaders who actively performed the 21 leadership

practices that they identified and explained in an earlier study of balanced leadership.

Secondly, they stated that all school leaders used a similar repertoire of basic leadership

practices. Those practices were organized in four categories. Building vision and setting

direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and

managing the teaching and learning program comprise the four categories. The third

claim was that the leaders must use the leadership practices to demonstrate

responsiveness to their contexts. They explained that this was particularly important in

turn around schools. The fourth claim was that school leaders improved teaching and

learning indirectly and did so more prominently through their influence on staff

motivation, commitment, and working conditions. Leithwood et al. (2008) also found

that school leadership had the greatest influence on schools and students when it was

widely distributed. In this fifth claim they discussed the leaders' strongest relationships

were with working conditions and the weakest ones were staff motivation and

commitment. The sixth claim was that some patterns of distribution are more effective

than others. Specifically, they found that schools with the highest levels of achievement

had the highest ratings of influence with school teams, parents, and students. They also

stated that it was important to note that there was no loss of power or influence for the

school leader when the power and influence of others in the school increased. The

seventh claim was that a small handful of personal traits explained a high proportion of

leader effectiveness. The leader traits that they found had the strongest relationship to

high performing schools were open-mindedness, a readiness to learn from others,

flexibility, resiliency, optimism, and a pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation,

commitment, learning and achievement for all.

Knoeppel and Rinehart (2007) conducted a study to examine high performing

schools and their leaders. They specifically wanted to know if the differences in the

leaders' professional training would correspond to their schools' academic performances.

The study was conducted in the state of Kentucky, and the school leaders were sorted into

three groups. The first group received their training prior to the adoption of an

assessment to measure proficiency for the skills required for the principalship. They

were also certified before the standards-based reform in Kentucky. The second group of

leaders was required to take the Kentucky Principals Test (KYPT) in order to obtain

certification. They were trained while standards-based reform was being implemented in

Kentucky.   The third group was trained in the professional standards of the Interstate

School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLIC). They were required to take the KYPT

and the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) for certification. They received training so they could understand standards-based accountability. In short, the principals who were trained in the era of standards-based reform with a curriculum that prepared them to lead in a myriad of roles, led schools that outperformed their counterparts.

Concerned with that myriad of roles that principals must assume, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2010) completed an analysis to determine the skills that an effective principal needed to possess. They categorized the skills into four sets. The first set was educational leadership; the discrete skills that this set required were setting instructional direction, teamwork, and sensitivity. The next set of skills was described as resolving complex problems. The skills necessary for this skill set were judgment, results orientation, and organizational ability. The third skill theme was communication, which required oral communication and written communication proficiency. The final skill category was developing self and others, which contained the discrete skills of developing others and understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses. This study clearly stated that effective principals positively impact their schools and that their effectiveness is related to improved student achievement.

Gamage, Adams, and McCormack (2009) summarized the relationship between school leaders and high student achievement by emphasizing the importance of adapting leadership styles to create collaborative working environments with high levels of commitment, motivation, and ownership. It is essential that leaders develop trusting and healthy school cultures that facilitate high productivity and increased student achievement. School principals must be managing directors, instructional leaders, change agents, marketers, facilitators, mediators, and key decision-makers.

In the search for minority schools that have closed achievement gaps with the

efforts of the school leader, the 90/90/90 schools provide a successful model. Anderson

(2004) explored common characteristics of 90/90/90 schools. These are schools that

have 90% or more free/reduced lunch students, 90% or more minority enrollment, and

have 90% or more of their students scoring in the top 10% on state or accountability tests.

She reported that the schools shared a focus on achievement, taught a clear curriculum,

and had frequent assessments. Also, the schools focused on writing in all subject areas

and used external evaluations of student work. This list of the 90/90/90 schools included

two of the traditional theme schools that the researcher examined in this study. Theme

school number two scored in the 91st percentile on state testing with 98.7% minority

enrollment. Theme school number three scored in the 98th percentile on state testing with

99.1% minority enrollment.

The examination of leadership behaviors and practices and their relationship to

academic achievement for African American students most often considered race,

cultural competency, and/or race/ethnicity impact. Barbara and Krovetz (2005)

advocated for principals of schools with minority students to hold open dialogue on race

among the faculty and staff in the context of Critical Race Theory. They urged leaders to

deal with the question of *white privilege* so that the staff may be proactive in addressing

and eliminating those conventions of white privilege commonly found in schools that

mirrored those found in American society. Smith (2005) suggested that principals work

to improve their cultural competence and help their staff members develop an

understanding and relevance of cultural competence in relation to their work with

students. Specifically, she recommended addressing teachers' assumptions or rightness.

This is the tendency for teachers to attribute all students' problems to the home and parents. Secondly, Smith stated that the luxury of ignorance must be eliminated. This is also an assumption that many teachers have that their students' home lives and experiences are similar to their own home lives and experiences. Finally, Smith emphasized that teachers must come to terms with the role of white privilege which gives advantages to some based on membership in the dominant culture of this country.

Papalewis and Forture (2003) studied a sample of 13 high achieving schools with student enrollment that was 51% or greater African American and/or Hispanic. The study data were collected in northern and southern California schools and accomplished using interviews and classroom observations. They concluded that the leaders of these schools affected the high student performance in the following ways: they communicated, illustrated, and demonstrated the school mission. The principals spent the first few weeks of the school year observing in the classrooms. The principals also protected instructional time by not allowing any interruptions in the classrooms before 10:30 a.m. The principals monitored student progress weekly. So they would have a good idea of the learning needs of each students, the principals administered the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) to all new students when they enrolled in the schools. The principals also organized site-base staff development activities. The students were required to wear school uniforms by consensus of the stakeholders. The principals also created a parent volunteer program that utilized a parent training component. The parent training taught parents how to proctor for testing and how to assist the classrooms. The volunteer program was flexible according to the parents' skills, time, interests, and the children's needs.

In a study conducted in three predominately African American schools in Georgia, Lee (2007) examined the presence of the nine cultural themes in the classrooms as promoted by the school principals to make instruction more culturally relevant and to affect student achievement. Of the nine cultural themes, she found evidence of seven of the themes in the high achieving schools. Harmony or the idea that humans and nature are congruently related was evident in the classrooms. The students' preference for action, variety, and a high level of stimulation known as *verve* was also noted in the classrooms. Movement or the utilization of the kinesthetic learning style was also observed. The use of the oral tradition that emphasizes oral communication with metaphors, analogies, and figurative language as a form of knowledge transmission, was also apparent in the classrooms. Affect or the high regard for emotional cues and emotional response was also observed in the classrooms. Expressive individualism or the need for developing a unique personality or an inherent inclination for spontaneous personal expression was also evident as a culturally responsive instructional strategy. Two of the cultural themes that were not evident to the researchers were spirituality and social time. Spirituality is the recognition of inner strength that may come from identification with a higher power, and social time refers to the event being more important than a schedule or designated time frame. The researcher concluded that the principals in these schools served as a catalyst for high student achievement by promoting culturally relevant instruction through training, creating a caring, nurturing environment, and cultivating a family concept among the school stakeholders. Additionally the principals advanced cultural relevancy by conferencing with teachers and making professional literature available to them.

A similar study was conducted in two Title I elementary schools in Georgia having high achievement with populations that were primarily African American. Reese (2008) was trying to determine what the principals did to promote the high academic performance of the students, particularly third grade students who were at-risk for below grade level performance. She concluded that the principals used four strategies to support academic achievement. The first strategy was providing teacher training for the instructional staff. The researcher found the areas of training were most commonly differentiated instruction and best practices. The second strategy used by the principals was the implementation of programs designed to raise student achievement such as the Early Intervention Program (EIP) and Response to Intervention (RTI) support in an extended day and/or tutorial format. The principals used effective leadership practices as their third strategy. The practices observed by the researcher were monitoring the classroom instruction, establishing a positive climate, and modeling a can do attitude. The fourth strategy that the principals employed was to create and maintain a program of parent and community involvement. According to Reese and the principals in her study, the aforementioned strategies were instrumental in raising student achievement.

A related study was completed by Trotter (2007) in the state of Washington. He focused on characteristics of principals in school environments that had successfully influenced Black student achievement. He reported that the principals influenced student achievement by (a) being visible, (b) establishing expectations and rigor, (c) monitoring student progress and student data, (d) improving relationships with students and parents, (e) having an urgency to close the achievement gap, (f) establishing a decision-making framework, (g) leading teachers to participate in courageous

conversations about race and culture, and (h) assessing the staff needs for professional development. Trotter stated that principals were in the most influential position to raise student achievement and could use that position to help teachers understand cultural competency and what Black students experience in the school setting. They should also provide teachers with professional development on collaboration, leadership, and differentiated instruction. Principals' daily interactions with the staff were morale building, and their daily interactions with students directly impacted student achievement.

Yeung, Lee, and Yue (2006) researched effective school leadership that sustained a positive learning climate in multicultural schools. They found that the distributed and integrated leadership models were most helpful in building shared visions within the schools. They also reported that principals who sustained effective leadership in a multicultural environment began with a clear sense of moral purpose, a respect for professional autonomy, and encouragement for all school stakeholders to personalize their ideas and beliefs. Yeung et al. advised that leaders must persist in the development of collaboration and shared responsibilities to ensure that trust is built among all school stakeholders.

Raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts has been reported in research as a worthy challenge. Immediately following attainment of student achievement goals comes the sustainability of those achievement levels. Jacobson (2011) conducted a follow-up study with schools who had achieved increased student achievement. This effort was part of the United States initiative of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP). Five years after the original study, the research team

returned to the schools to determine if they were able to maintain their former levels of high student achievement. Their concentration was on the contribution that the principal made to the overall school effectiveness as evidenced by the high student achievement levels. The school that had the same principal in place showed continued measurable improvement. As they explored what had occurred at the school during the past five years, the school's leader stated that the school's success was in its stakeholders' abilities to renew themselves. These renewing conditions included a shared commitment, collaboration, and building relationships grounded in mutual support, care, trust and consensus. The school had remained faithful to its original direction set by the principal. The challenge came in the form of changing district policies and procedures that threatened staff retention, hiring, training, and the sustainability of the instructional program and the school climate. To sustain the school culture of high achievement and to avoid the district policies that threatened to dismantle it, the school became a conversion charter. This allowed the school the fiscal autonomy and the human resource flexibility to continue in its successful direction. According to Jacobson, the second analysis makes it clear that the principal is still the central figure in maintaining the school's direction. Significant organization restructuring was needed to sustain the culture of high student achievement, but those changes should allow the school to flourish even after the principal's eventual retirement.

Public School Choice Initiatives and Models

School choice is not a new concept in public education. The movement of choice in public schools dates back to the 1970s. Special schools known as magnet schools were being offered as alternatives to traditional public schools. These alternative schools were

based on the idea that all students do not learn the same way; therefore, schools with specialized curriculums based on students' aptitudes and interests would attract students and teachers. Furthermore, because the adults had chosen to work in the schools and the students had elected to attend the schools, success was more likely than schools who had assigned faculty and students. Wealthy parents have always had choices with educational alternatives because they could afford expensive private academies. The magnet or alternative schools movement was popular because it offered specialized educational opportunities that cost nothing to attend (Waldrip, 2007).

During the late 1960s school districts were challenged by desegregation mandates designed to equalize educational opportunities for all students. Magnet schools were often used as a caveat for parents to voluntarily transfer their children to other schools. The specialized curriculum, themes, and/or instructional offerings were designed to meet and enhance the children's natural talents, abilities, interests, and aptitudes. Many large school districts offered high schools with career strands; visual and performing arts schools; math, science, and technology programs; foreign language schools and even Montessori programs. Often the courts approved these volunteer transfer options to meet desegregation mandates and to reduce racial isolation in public schools (Waldrip, 2007).

Recently, school choice in the United States has taken several formats including private school admission, public school choice, home schooling, and virtual or on-line schooling. The public school choice model that the researcher explored was the alternative that allowed parents to select a public school other than the public school that their children were assigned by attendance zone to attend. The National Center for Education Statistics reported in 2007 that 73.2 % of children attended their assigned

public school as compared to 80% in 1993. In 2007 16% of school children were reported to attend a public choice school, which was a gain from 1993 when just 11% of school children attended a public choice school (Burke, 2009). There were also several reported benefits to attending a public choice school. When parents were asked how satisfied they were with their assigned public schools, only 55% indicated satisfaction, as compared to 63% of parents whose children attended public choice schools. Parents were also asked about their satisfaction with the academic programs at their schools. Assigned public school parents expressed a satisfaction level of 58%, and 67% of public choice school parents expressed satisfaction with the academic program. Parents also weighed in on their satisfaction with their school in matters of discipline and order. Parents whose children attended assigned public schools reported a 58% satisfaction rate, and parents whose children attend public choice school gave a satisfaction rate of 63% with the discipline and order of the school (Burke, 2009). This study did not report the effectiveness of the school choice program in terms of student achievement gains; instead the study focused on the parent perceptions of the effectiveness of the school choice program that was assessed as satisfaction.

Cullen, Jacob, and Levitt (2004) completed a study of the Chicago Public Schools' choice program. They reported that high school students often exercised their option of attending a high school other than their neighborhood school. Many lower achieving students selected a regular high school that they perceived had a higher quality educational opportunity. Average achieving students commonly selected a high school due to its career academy offerings. High achieving students often chose to attend a high achieving high school. There appeared to be some academic benefit to the students who

opted out of their neighborhood high schools. The researcher reported that among the students who opted out of their home schools, there was a 6.5 percentage point increase in completion of the tenth grade and an eight percentage point increase in the completion of the eleventh grade on time. The students who opted out reported that they were better prepared for high school, had higher expectations for graduation and the future, generally posted better junior high grades, and were less likely to have failed a grade, or to have been suspended from school. Additionally they were absent fewer days. About one-half of the high school students in the Chicago Public Schools opted out of their local high schools to attend another public choice high school. The students who opted out were more likely to graduate high school than equivalent students who remained in the local high schools. Cullen et al, suggested that the explanation for this is that the students who opted out had more motivation and parent involvement in their education. They noted an exception to this was the students who chose to attend the career academy high schools designed to meet the needs of student by preparing them for real world job skills. The researchers concluded that the career academies offered a marked improvement in graduation rates which was consistent with the findings of other national studies.

This study focused on the leadership behaviors at five traditional theme schools. These schools are local examples of a large, urban school district's menu of public school choices. According to a United States Department of Education report on Creating Strong District School Choice Programs, programs such as the traditional theme schools are usually successful if they have competent leaders and staff, form true partnerships with parents and community, and treat accountability and competition as positive factors (US DOE, 2004). Parents of African American students reported that they are turning to

public choice school alternatives for quality educational opportunities for their children. Public charter schools claim to have a positive impact on African American students because they have a foundation of high expectations that are focused on a mission-driven curriculum and quality teaching. The schools also report that they have some added flexibility in teacher hiring, budget data-driven decision-making, and designing a high quality curriculum (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2008).

The Traditional Theme School History and Hallmarks

During the late 1960s a large, urban school system in the Southeastern United States was challenged to dismantle a dual school system that provided separate and unequal education for Caucasian and African American students. The original court case was heard in the U. S. Supreme Court and remanded to the lower courts for continued guidance and supervision through the 1990s (Pitts v. Cherry, 1969). The school district offered two popular public school choice alternatives that reduced racial isolation in many of the district's school. The Majority to Minority transfers and the magnet schools satisfied the court orders and promoted a level of integration in schools that previously consisted of a predominately homogeneous racial group of students.

The volunteer transfer programs were successful in many schools; however, a large group of overcrowded, predominately African American schools still existed in the southern part of the district. In an effort to provide relief from overcrowded schools, a unique educational opportunity was provided as an incentive for students to transfer from their neighborhood schools to the newly created traditional theme schools. Three elementary traditional theme schools were implemented in 1996-1997. During the next few years, three more elementary traditional theme schools were added to the district's

school choice program. An examination of the demographics in each school indicates that six of the schools are predominately African American (95%-99%) serving a student population from economically disadvantaged families.

Just as successful volunteer transfer programs in the past provided an incentive for parents to voluntarily transfer their children to new schools, the traditional theme schools operated following the Marva Collins model of educational innovation (Collins, 1992; Collins & Tarmarkin, 1982). There were no required test scores or grade point averages to be admitted to the schools. Often there were more applicants than seats available, so every year available seats were filled with a lottery procedure (2011-2012 Anonymous System Theme Schools Brochure).

The hallmarks of the traditional theme schools were public school choice, inclusion for special needs, tutorial for students-at-risk for failure, required parental volunteer hours, and school uniforms. The theme schools offered best practices advocated by Collins similar to those implemented in the Westside Preparatory Academy in Chicago, Illinois (Collins & Tarmarkin, 1982). Collins had years of success teaching children who had learning and emotional problems in a regular classroom setting. Drawing from her success, the theme schools served students with disabilities (SWD), gifted, English Learners (EL), and students with 504 plans in classrooms that are organized around an inclusion philosophy. Collins emphasized with parents, teachers, and students the importance of parental involvement and support in their children's education. "Parents, you are the first teachers your children experience. You are the most influential teachers they will ever have" (Collins & Tarmarkin, 1982 p.9). The theme schools require each child's parent(s) to render 16 hours of volunteer service in the

school each academic year. The completion of the volunteer hours is a requirement for a student to be enrolled for the next school year. To further ensure academic success, all students have on-site tutorial after school if they drop below a "C" average. Additionally, all students are required to wear school uniforms each day (2011-2012 Anonymous System Theme Schools Brochure).

The traditional theme schools were designed to attract interested parents and students to select the schools as their choice option for public schooling. The standards and requirements of the theme schools afforded students an educational alternative with a rigorous plan for teaching and learning. The achievement data of these schools and the narrowing and/or elimination of achievement gaps of African American students led the researcher to investigate of the nature of the leadership behaviors and practices utilized by the principals. The researcher also examined relationships between the leadership behaviors and the academic achievement of the students and the nature and strength of the relationships.

Researchers have explored the qualities of effective schools to determine if the schools were effective because of the children that they admitted or if the children were successful because of the school they attended (Rutter et al., 1979). According to Rutter and his research team, there were and will always be interaction effects between the quality of the students and the quality of the schools, but they concluded that there was a greater effect of the schools on the children than the children on the schools; therefore, the schools do influence pupil outcome.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two included a discussion of student achievement gaps in terms of Critical Race Theory and the Oppositional Culture Theory. A historical account of the roles that schools play in student outcomes has been tracked from the days of the Coleman Report through the effective school movement including leadership empowerment for gap-closing strategies implemented during the past decade.

Leadership models that affected student achievement have been discussed in terms of leadership traits, behaviors, responsibilities, theories, and frameworks. Leader efficacy has also been considered as it impacts student performance. The role of "race" has also been reviewed as it affects leadership actions, priorities, and practices. Specific strategies that leaders employed in schools that serve predominately African American students utilized to address student achievement challenges were included. The relationship between the use of these strategies with African American students and academic achievement has been explored in terms of closing the achievement gap between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts.

A brief history of the public school choice program has been traced from desegregation remedies through special interest magnet schools, theme schools, career academies, and charter schools. The public school choice initiative that was the focus of this study, the traditional theme schools, has been discussed in terms of its history and distinctive features.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study was a sequential, explanatory mixed methods design. This type of design involves quantitative research for the first phase and qualitative research for the second phase of the study. A mixed methods study is appropriate when the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches in tandem so that the strength of the study is greater than it would be if just one approach was used (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative portion of the study is appropriate to test assumptions, generalize the results, and replicate the findings. The qualitative portion of the study allowed the researcher to explore the shared school culture and the complexity of the principals' efforts to facilitate and sustain the culture of high student achievement. The timing of this mixed methods study was quantitative data collection and analysis first, followed by the qualitative portion of the study. The weighting gave priority to the quantitative data and secondary importance to the qualitative data. The mixing of the data occurred in the data analysis and interpretation stages. The data from the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study were integrated during the data analysis portion of the study. The function of the qualitative data, which was the principals' interview transcripts, was to support the analysis of the quantitative findings, the teachers' survey responses. Leadership theory drove the quantitative portion of the study, which consisted of a teacher survey, and the advocacy/participatory lens guided the qualitative portion of the study.

The Quantitative Portion of the Study

Study Design

The quantitative phase of the sequential, explanatory mixed methods study consisted of a survey to collect teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors that foster high student achievement for African American students in the traditional theme schools. The quantitative data collection comprised the first and most heavily weighted phase of the study. The survey was administered by the researcher to the certified staff members of each school's staff immediately following a faculty meeting. The survey administration was cross-sectional since it was only offered in a single administration at each school.

Sample

The researcher focused on the teachers who teach in five traditional theme schools that educate African American students in the elementary grades pre-kindergarten through fifth. This particular sample was used because these schools have implemented an educational initiative that has narrowed the achievement gap between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts. The sampling procedure was a purposeful sample because the teachers must have been employed in one of the traditional theme schools. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (2007), a purposeful sample is used when the goal is to select participants who are information-rich with respect to the purposes of the study.

Adhering to the guidelines of the school district, data collection for research purposes was not be collected during the instructional day; instead, the survey was administered to the theme school teachers following a regularly scheduled staff meeting.

The researcher secured the permission of the school district to conduct the study which entailed collecting the survey and interview data in the theme schools. Although participation was not required, historically the theme school staffs have been enthusiastic to share their accomplishments. There were approximately 200 certified staff employed at the theme schools at the time of the data collection. A sample size of 132 teacher respondents to the survey was necessary to meet the requirements for a 95% confidence interval (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Table 3 summarizes the demographic composition of the five theme schools. For identification purposes they are numbered TTS #1 through TTS #5. The number of students enrolled as of October 2011 is listed in the second column. The next four columns detail the percent of the student population who were categorized into four disaggregated groups. The percentages include African American (AA), Economically Disadvantaged (ED), Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English Learner (EL).

Table 3

Demographics of the Sample Schools

School	enrollment	% AA	% ED	% SWD	% EL
TTS #1	871	95.06	61.77	2.76	0.11
TTS #2	842	98.22	67.20	2.61	0.36
TTS #3	970	98.70	46.80	3.20	0
TTT #4	947	98.52	43.08	2.75	0.63
TTS #5	481	93.97	80.25	3.74	22.04

Instrumentation

The survey that was used was the teacher form of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) published by Hallinger (1985). The survey has three demographic questions and 50 questions on leadership behaviors that were answered by teachers using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from almost always to almost never. All of the questions begin with the same question stem which is "to what extent does your principal…?" The survey is organized into three dimensions of instructional leadership: *defining the school mission, managing the instructional program,* and *developing the school learning climate*. These dimensions are further delineated into 10 instructional leadership functions or subscales. Under the domain *defining the school mission,* are two subscales. They are frames the school's goals and communicates the school's goals. The dimension *managing the instructional program* contains three subscales. They are coordinates the curriculum, supervises and evaluates the instruction, and monitors student progress. *Developing the school learning climate* is the dimension that has five subscales. They include protects instructional time, provides incentives for teachers, provides incentives for learning, promotes professional development, and maintains visibility. The researcher obtained written permission from the author and publisher of the PIMRS to use the instrument in this study.

Table 4 represents the categories of the 50 questions on the PIMRS listed under the three dimensions of principal leadership and further delineated by subscales. The number of questions for each subscale is listed adjacent to the subscale title in column two.

Table 4

Survey Instrument (PIMRS) Dimensions and Subscales with the Number of Items

Survey Instrument Dimensions and Subscales	Number of Items
Defining the School Mission	
Frames the School Mission and Goals	5
Communicates the School Mission and Goals	5
Managing the Instructional Program	
Supervises and Evaluates Instruction	5
Coordinates the Curriculum	5
Monitors Student Progress	5
Developing the School Climate	
Protects Instructional Time	5
Maintains High Visibility	5
Provides Incentives for Teachers	5
Promotes Professional Development	5
Provides Incentives for Student Learning	5

Each subscale was tested for reliability to determine the degree that the scales measured the targeted phenomena consistently. The Cronbach Alpha test of internal consistency was used to determine how each subscale correlated with each other. The reliability of the instrument exceeded .80 on nine of the subscales and .78 on one

subscale. The instrument was also tested for construct validity and discriminant validity and determined to be a valid measurement tool (Hallinger, 2008).

Table 5 lists each subscale in the same order that they appear on the teacher form of the PIMRS instrument. Immediately adjacent to the subscale are the reliability coefficients for each subscale.

Table 5

Reliability Estimates for the Principal Instructional Management Subscales

Subscale	Reliability
Frames School's Goals	.89
Communicates School's Goals	.89
Supervises and Evaluates Instruction	.90
Coordinates Curriculum	.90
Monitors Student Progress	.90
Protects Instructional Time	.84
Maintains Visibility	.81
Provides Incentives for Teachers	.78
Promotes Professional Development	.86
Provides Incentives for Learning	.87

Variables

For this study, the leadership behaviors were the independent variables and student achievement for African American students was the dependent variable. The

independent variables were delineated according to the dimensions of instructional

leadership on the PIMRS. They consisted of the three domains that are *defining the*

school mission, managing the instructional program, and *developing the school learning*

climate. The ten subscales were also treated as independent variables for the purposes of

analysis. The dependent variable was measured by using the percent of students who

met/exceeded the standard on the CRCT in the spring of 2011 in reading/ELA and

mathematics. These values are two of the data sources that are used to determine

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for accountability purposes.

Table 6 lists the five elementary traditional theme schools by number TTS #1

through TTS #5 in the first column. The second column contains the percent of students

scoring 800 or higher on the Reading CRCT and the English/Language Arts CRCT. This

represents the percentage of students who scored in the meets or exceeds the standard tier

of the CRCT in the spring administration in 2011. The third column indicates the

percentage of students who scored 800 or higher, which placed them in the meets or

exceeds the standard tier of the Mathematics CRCT administered in the spring of 2011.

Table 6

Sample Schools 2011 AYP Percentages Met/Exceeded the Standard

Schools	Reading/ELA %	Math %
TTS #1	93.5	84.3
TTS #2	96.1	88.1
TTS #3	94.1	83.6
TTS #4	96.3	88.3
TTS #5	95.7	89.1

Data Collection

The survey data were collected by the researcher immediately following a faculty meeting at each of the theme schools. The researcher requested from each principal an opportunity to briefly explain the nature and importance of the study to the faculties of each school. The survey was administered to all teachers on staff; however, according to the guidelines of the school district, teachers cannot be required to respond. A cover letter and a copy of the survey were distributed to the participants. Certified staff were allowed time to read and complete the survey items. The principals were not present in the rooms during the completion of the surveys. The survey documents were collected face down and placed in an envelope labeled TTS # 1, TTS # 2, etc. The completed surveys were stored in a sealed envelope with the school number identifying the completed instruments. This ensured anonymity of the participants' responses.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After the survey data were collected, the actual response rate was calculated. The survey results were recorded on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and transferred into SPSS 19.0 for further analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed for descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, range, and standard deviation. The researcher conducted a Chi-Square test for independence to consider the PIMRS scores in the three dimensions in the schools with the highest and lowest academic achievement. This type of cross tabulation is often conducted to determine if two categorical variables are related. In this study variable A had three levels which were the teachers' ratings (low, medium, high) on the three dimensions of the PIMRS. Variable B had two levels, which were the highest achieving school and the lowest achieving school. The Chi-square test for independence was done for both reading/English/language arts and mathematics achievement using the CRCT scores from 2011. To access the nature and strength of the relationship between the average PIMRS score on the three dimensions and the average student achievement scores for the highest scoring and lowest scoring school, a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis was completed.

The users of the PIMRS are encouraged to consider the needs of the school, other administrators' scores, and changes in the scores from prior years and to use the results as a formative assessment tool (Hallinger, 2008). The results were presented in tables and a discussion format.

<center>**The Qualitative Portion of the Study**</center>

Study Design

The qualitative portion of the larger sequential, explanatory, mixed methods study was phase two and took place following the after the quantitative phase of the study was conducted. The qualitative phase was characteristic of the phenomenological case study tradition concentrating on the principals' perspectives of their shared experiences of leadership in the traditional theme schools (Creswell, 2007). This design allowed the researcher to examine in-depth the principals' intents, thoughts, experiences, and perceived effects of their day-to-day leadership behaviors in their schools. In the individual interviews the principals shared their experiences in response to ten open-ended questions. They offered an overall perspective of their leadership in each of the identified subscales and gave specific examples from their respective schools of programs and initiatives that illustrated the various aspects of leadership.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher is employed by the same school district as the principal participants and teachers in the study. The researcher has a professional relationship with all of the schools and the leaders. The researcher served as an instructional coordinator for the schools in the past; however, only one of the principals was in a leadership position of a theme school during the researcher's tenure as instructional coordinator. In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to reveal any relationships with the participants in the study that may bias the study. After doing so, it is important that the researcher set aside his/her relationships, previous experiences, and personal beliefs for the purposes of this study (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the researcher acted as an

outsider by serving in the role of interviewer with the traditional theme school principals

(Creswell, 2007). The researcher controlled personal and professional bias through

reflexivity.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher contacted the principals by email to set up appointments to speak

with them briefly about participation in the study. The school system requires the

researcher to secure permission with a signed document after presenting to the principal

an abstract, copies of the data collection instruments/protocols, copies of the cover letter,

letter of informed consent, and a list of any school data requested from the principal. The

interviews were held at a convenient time and location for each principal. The researcher

asked ten questions designed to solicit responses from the school principal that revealed

specific leadership behaviors and the effects of these behaviors on the culture of

academic achievement prevalent at his/her school. The questions were aligned with the

PIMRS and stimulated ideas that exemplified the ten subscales of instructional

leadership: framing the mission and goals, communicating the mission and goals,

supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student

progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for

teachers, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for student

learning.

Sample and Sampling

This was a purposeful sample of five traditional theme school principals. A

purposeful sample was used because it was essential that the principal participants were

current leaders of the traditional theme schools and that these schools had predominately

African American student populations. These principals had in-depth information about

their leadership behaviors related to student achievement in their buildings. A purposeful

sample is used when the researcher requires participants who are information-rich

regarding the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2009).

All of the principals were African American females except one who was an

African American male. These leaders have been in their present principal positions

ranging from three to ten years. During their tenures as principals, the schools have

evidenced academic achievement levels that have closed the achievement gap as

compared to other schools in the district and the state when African American students

are compared with their Caucasian counterparts.

Data Recording

The researcher used a digital recorder to tape the interviews with each principal.

Additionally, the researcher made field notes during the interviews which will included

major points, facial expressions, hand gestures, voice inflection, and other body language

that added meaning to the spoken words. The digital recordings were transcribed by

GMR Transcriptions, a national company that provides transcription services for

educational purposes. GMR Transcriptions provided type written transcripts of the

uploaded digital audio tapes. The transcripts were downloaded, printed and

electronically saved by the researcher for coding and further reference.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative data analysis and the coding process

typically follows eight steps. The copy of the interview transcriptions will be read first

for general content. From the second reading, significant statements of leadership

behaviors and academic successes will be extracted. The third reading of the

transcriptions will help determine preliminary themes of major topics, unique topics, and

leftovers. The fourth reading will apply codes to the corresponding sections of the

transcriptions. The researcher will also look for emerging themes. The fifth step will

combine the themes into categories or main themes. A sixth step will be a final decision

of the categories, and the researcher will alphabetize the codes. The seventh step will be

to assemble data belonging to each category and begin analysis for inferential meanings

that may be concluded. The eighth step is to check the codes and categories and revise if

needed. The analyzed data, significant statements, emerging themes, coding categories,

and inferences were presented in tables and text. Subsequent discussion included direct

quotes from the interview transcriptions.

Verification

It is essential in qualitative research that the researcher takes steps to insure

trustworthiness. This is most commonly accomplished by establishing credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is the confidence that there

is truth in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher addressed credibility by

use of triangulation. Triangulation is using multiple data sources to reach understanding

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used quantitative and qualitative approaches in

the study. Additionally two different data sources were used including teacher survey

responses and the principals' interview transcripts. These data were triangulated for

analysis.

In an effort to further develop trustworthiness, the researcher established

transferability. Transferability is showing that the findings may be applicable in other

contexts. Transferability is best accomplished by the use of thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of thick and detailed description is so that the cultural relationships may be put into context. This is a way of achieving external validity so that one may begin to evaluate the extent that the research conclusions may be transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. The researcher accomplished this by providing significant statements, direct quotes, and inferential statements drawn directly from the interview transcripts. The researcher has also provided a detailed description of the context and the participants.

Another part of trustworthiness is dependability, which is showing that the findings are consistent and that the study could be repeated. This is often done by having an external audit. The difficulty with an external audit is that an outside researcher may not be familiar with the context and the data of the study which may alter the point of view and the conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because of the unique context of this study, the traditional theme schools, the researcher did not use an external auditor. The other components of trustworthiness which are credibility, transferability, and confirmabilty, were sufficiently strong to establish trustworthiness of the study.

Confirmability is the final part of trustworthiness, and it is the degree of neutrality or the extent that the findings are shaped by the respondents and not by the researcher's bias. This was accomplished by using an audit trail. An audit trail is a transparent description of the research steps taken by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher collected student achievement data and survey responses from teachers, and coded the principal interview transcripts for significant statements, themes, and inferences in preparation for data analysis.

Trustworthiness was established for this study by using triangulation to formulate credibility. To achieve transferability, thick description was used. Confirmability was accomplished by the use of an audit trail. Using these methods, the study demonstrated truth in the findings, applicability to other contexts, consistency and ability to be repeated, and possession of a degree of neutrality so that the study was shaped by the respondents and not by the researcher's bias.

Chapter Summary

This study was designed to collect perceptions from teachers and perspectives from principals to examine the relationship between leadership behaviors and the high academic achievement of African American students in the traditional theme schools. This sequential explanatory mixed methods study was conducted in two phases. The quantitative portion was implemented first and received the greater weight. The data collection was accomplished using a survey, and analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative component of the study was conducted second and employed interviews to examine the study phenomena in greater detail and depth. The analysis included significant statements, preliminary themes, unifying themes, and inferences drawn from the interview transcripts. The quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis were compared, contrasted, and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The focus of this study was to examine an effective initiative that has been successful in eliminating the achievement gap for African American students. One of the most persistent problems in public schools is achievement gaps particularly between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts. Because academic success in school is linked to successful completion of higher education, income potential, and general health and well-being, achievement gaps are a life-long problem for African Americans. Various educational initiatives have been implemented and met with sporadic and limited success in an effort to close the achievement gap.

The study was limited to five public schools that are part of a local school district's choice offerings. These schools have demonstrated marked academic success during the past 15 years. The researcher explored the leadership behaviors of principals that fostered a culture of high academic achievement for African American students. Data collection consisted of teachers' perceptions and principals' perspectives and was obtained using a survey instrument and principal interviews. This sequential, explanatory mixed methods study used purposeful sampling to select teachers and principals to participate in the study. The quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; the qualitative data were analyzed for significant statements and general themes, as well as support and explanatory details that added greater depth and understanding to the quantitative findings.

Research Questions

The study was designed to answer one overarching question. What leadership behaviors and practices facilitate and sustain a culture of high academic achievement for African American students in the traditional theme schools? In addition, the following sub-questions supported the overarching question. Questions one, two, and three were posed to guide the quantitative portion of the study and question number four was intended to direct the qualitative component of the study.

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to defining the school mission and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the leadership behaviors and practices relative to managing the instructional program and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school?

3. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to developing the learning climate program and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school?

4. What principal behaviors and practices are instrumental in defining the mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate in the traditional theme schools?

Research Design

This study was designed to collect perceptions from teachers and perspectives from principals to examine the relationship between leadership behaviors and the high academic achievement of African American students in the traditional theme schools.

This sequential, explanatory mixed methods study was conducted in two phases. The quantitative portion was implemented first and received the greater weight. The data collection was accomplished using a survey, and analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative component of the study was conducted second and employed interviews to examine the study phenomena in greater detail and depth. The analysis included significant statements, preliminary themes, unifying themes, and inferences drawn from the interview transcripts. The quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis were compared, contrasted, and discussed.

Findings

The findings of the study include the results of the teachers' survey and responses from the principals' interview questions. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to interpret the teachers' survey which was the quantitative portion and the first phase of the study. The principals' interview responses comprised the qualitative portion which was the second phase of the study. The quantitative portion of the study was most heavily weighted and the qualitative findings were used to inform the quantitative results.

Quantitative Results

Respondents.

In phase one, the PIMRS survey was administered to 135 teachers in the five elementary traditional theme schools. The teachers were certified employees who taught pre-kindergarten through fifth grades. A few teachers were beginning teachers; however, most were experienced teachers having a range of prior teaching service spanning two to more than 30 years of service. Some teachers had a bachelor's degree, but most were

working toward or have earned an advanced degree included master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Many teachers had state certification that included a gifted endorsement. Less than 20% of the teachers were male and most teachers were African American with less than 10% Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian, or multi-racial.

Descriptive statistics.

The first 10 items informed research question number one which concentrated on framing and communicating the school mission and goals. The responses to these items ranged from *almost always* to *frequently* (4.59-4.21). The highest rated behaviors were using data for the development of school goals and discussing school goals at faculty meetings. The lowest rated behavior (4.21) was referring to school mission and goals in forum with students. Table 7 lists the 10 question numbers in this dimension, the number of respondents to the questions, the mean response for each question, and the standard deviation.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Defining the School Mission of the PIMRS

Survey Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1	135	4.46	.731
Q2	135	4.46	.741
Q3	135	4.27	.803
Q4	135	4.59	.683
Q5	134	4.47	.722
Q6	134	4.42	.769
Q7	135	4.59	.626
Q8	134	4.44	.731
Q9	133	4.26	.974
Q10	135	4.21	.917

The PIMRS items 11-25 informed research question number two which explored managing the instructional program which includes leadership behaviors of monitoring and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The responses ranged from *almost always* to *frequently* (4.59-4.04). The most highly rated behavior was using test results to assess progress (4.59). The lowest rated item was meeting individually with teachers to assess student progress (4.04). Table 8 lists the 15

question numbers in this dimension, the number of respondents to the questions, the

mean response for each question, and the standard deviation.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Managing the Instructional Program of the PIMRS

Survey Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q11	134	4.40	.814
Q12	134	4.11	1.001
Q13	135	4.28	.886
Q14	133	4.40	.861
Q15	134	4.40	.805
Q16	135	4.54	.710
Q17	135	4.56	.687
Q18	134	4.42	.798
Q19	133	4.51	.775
Q20	134	4.34	.858
Q21	133	4.04	1.076
Q22	135	4.50	.752
Q23	135	4.59	.715
Q24	134	4.43	.818
Q25	134	4.21	.966

The last set of items, numbered 26-50, informed research question number three which is leadership behaviors relative to developing the school learning climate. This dimension comprises protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for student learning. The teachers' responses ranged from *almost always* to *sometimes* (4.57-3.14) on the 25 items. The highest rated items were recognizing students at assemblies or honors day programs (4.57), obtaining participation of whole staff at in-service activities (4.52), making sure that in-services are consistent with school goals (4.51), and encouraging teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practices new concepts and skills (4.53). The lowest scoring behaviors were tutoring students (3.14), covering classes (3.43), acknowledging teachers' exceptional performance with personal memos for their files (3.66), ensuring tardy and truant students receive consequences for missing instructional time (3.71), creating professional growth opportunities for teachers as a reward for special contributions to the school (3.94) and, rewarding teachers with opportunities for professional recognition (3.95). Table 9 lists the 25 question numbers in this dimension, the number of respondents to the questions, the mean response for each question, and the standard deviation.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Developing the School Learning Climate of the PIMRS

Survey Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q26	135	4.22	1.041
Q27	134	4.16	1.025
Q28	132	3.71	1.287
Q29	133	4.53	.793
Q30	135	4.13	1.096
Q31	134	3.83	1.073
Q32	134	3.85	1.100
Q33	135	4.25	.912
Q34	134	3.43	1.468
Q35	133	3.14	1.483
Q36	135	4.25	.968
Q37	134	4.10	1.035
Q38	128	3.66	1.360
Q39	133	3.95	1.103
Q40	131	3.94	1.162
Q41	134	4.51	.723
Q42	132	4.49	.786

(continued)

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Developing the School Learning Climate of the PIMRS

(continued)

Survey Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q43	134	4.52	.763
Q44	133	4.41	.896
Q45	134	4.37	.977
Q46	134	4.45	.922
Q47	134	4.57	.720
Q48	133	4.15	1.138
Q49	128	4.02	1.184
Q50	133	4.23	1.007

Inferential statistics.

To explore the relationship perceived by the teachers between the leadership behaviors in each dimension of the PIMRS to the culture of high academic achievement in the traditional theme schools, a series of statistical tests were performed. These tests used the academic achievement data from the highest and lowest scoring theme schools on the Reading/English Language Arts Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests and the Mathematics Criterion-Referenced Competency Test administered in 2011.

To address research question number one and determine if there was a significant

relationship between the teachers' perceptions (ratings) on the dimension *defining the school mission* on the PIMRS and student achievement in reading/English/language arts and mathematics, two Chi-square tests for independence were performed. These tests indicated no significant relationships between teacher ratings (low, medium, high) on the dimension *defining the school mission* of the PIMRS and student achievement for the highest performing and the lowest performing schools on the reading/English/language arts CRCT (χ^2 (2, n = 41) = 5.68, p = .06, Cramer's V = .37, or mathematics (χ^2 (2, n = 41) = 1.34, p = .51, Cramer's V = .14. Table 10 presents the cross tabulation results for defining the school mission (DSM) and student achievement in reading/English/language arts (RELA). Table 11 presents the cross tabulation results for defining the school mission (DSM) and student achievement in mathematics (Math).

Table 10

Cross-tabulation of Defining the School Mission (DSM) Dimension of the PIMRS

and Student Achievement in Reading/English/Language Arts (RELA)

			Teachers' Ratings Level		
			Low	High	Total
DSM	Low	Count	2	14	16
		Expected Count	5.1	10.9	16.0
		% within DSM	12.5%	87.5%	100%
		% within RELA	15.4%	50.0%	39.0%
		% of Total	4.9%	34.1%	39.0%
	Medium	Count	6	8	12
		Expected Count	3.8	8.2	12.0
		% within DSM	33.3%	67.7%	100%
		% within RELA	30.8%	28.6%	29.3%
		% of Total	9.8%	19.5%	29.3%
	High	Count	7	6	13
		Expected Count	4.1	8.9	13.0
		% within DSM	53.8%	46.2%	100%
		% within RELA	53.8%	21.4%	31.7%
		% of Total	17.1%	14.6%	31.7%

Table 11

Cross-tabulation of Defining the School Mission (DSM) Dimension of the PIMRS

and Student Achievement in Mathematics (Math)

			Teachers' Ratings Level		
			Low	High	Total
DSM	Low	Count	11	12	23
		Expected Count	11.0	12.0	23.0
		% within DSM	47.8%	52.2%	100%
		% within Math	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
		% of Total	15.9%	17.4%	33.3%
	Medium	Count	10	15	25
		Expected Count	12.0	13.0	25.0
		% within DSM	40.0%	60.0%	100%
		% within Math	30.3%	41.7%	36.2%
		% of Total	14.5%	21.7%	36.2%
	High	Count	12	9	21
		Expected Count	10.0	11.0	21.0
		% within DSM	57.1%	42.9%	100%
		% within Math	36.4%	25.0%	30.4%
		% of Total	17.4%	13.0%	30.4%

To address research question number two and determine if there was a significant relationship between the teachers' perceptions (ratings) on the dimension *managing the instructional program* on the PIMRS and student achievement in reading/English/language arts and mathematics, two Chi-square tests for independence were performed. A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant relationship between teacher ratings (low, medium, high) on the *managing instructional program* dimension of the PIMRS and student achievement in reading/English/language arts, χ^2 (2, $n = 41) = 7.90$, $p = .02$, Cramer's V = .44. There were no significant associations found between teacher ratings on *managing the instructional program* (χ^2 (2, n = 69) = 6.12, p = .05, Cramer's V = .30, and student achievement in mathematics. Table 12 represents the cross tabulation results for the teachers' ratings on managing the instructional program (MIP) on the PIMRS and student achievement in reading/English/language arts (RELA). Table 13 represents the cross tabulation results for the teachers' ratings on *managing the instructional program* (MIP) on the PIMRS and student achievement in mathematics (Math).

Table 12

Cross-tabulation of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP) Dimension of the PIMRS and Student Achievement in Reading/English/Language Arts (RELA)

| | | | Teachers' Ratings Level | | |
			Low	High	Total
MIP	Low	Count	1	15	16
		Expected Count	5.1	10.9	16.0
		% within MIP	6.3%	93.8%	100%
		% within RELA	7.7%	53.6%	39.0%
		% of Total	2.4%	36.6%	39.0%
	Medium	Count	6	6	12
		Expected Count	3.8	8.2	12.0
		% within MIP	50.0%	50.0%	100%
		% within RELA	46.2%	21.4%	29.3%
		% of Total	14.6%	14.6%	29.3%
	High	Count	6	7	13
		Expected Count	4.1	8.9	13.0
		% within MIP	46.2%	53.8%	100%
		% within RELA	46.2%	25.0%	31.7%
		% of Total	14.6%	17.1%	31.7%

Table 13

Cross-tabulation of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP) Dimension of the PIMRS and Student Achievement in Mathematics (Math)

			Teachers' Ratings Level		
			Low	High	Total
MIP	Low	Count	14	12	26
		Expected Count	12.4	13.6	26.0
		% within MIP	53.8%	46.2%	100%
		% within Math	42.4%	33.3%	37.7%
		% of Total	20.3%	17.4%	37.7%
	Medium	Count	5	15	20
		Expected Count	9.6	10.4	12.0
		% within MIP	25.0%	75.0%	100%
		% within Math	15.2%	41.7%	29.0%
		% of Total	7.2%	21.7%	29.0%
	High	Count	14	9	23
		Expected Count	11.0	12.0	23.0
		% within MIP	60.9%	39.9%	100%
		% within Math	42.6%	25.0%	33.3%
		% of Total	20.3%	13.0%	33.3%

To answer research question number three and determine if there was a significant relationship between the teachers' perceptions (ratings) on the dimension *developing the school learning climate* on the PIMRS and student achievement in reading/English/language arts and mathematics, two Chi-square tests for independence were performed. There were no significant associations found between teacher ratings on *developing the school learning climate* (χ^2 (2, *n* = 41) = 1.06, *p* = .59, Cramer's V = .16, and student achievement in reading/English/language arts. The second test indicated a significant relationship between teacher ratings (low, medium, high) on the *developing the school learning climate* dimension of the PIMRS and student achievement for the highest and lowest performing schools in mathematics (χ^2 (1, n = 69) = 6.62, p = .04, Cramer's V = .04. Table 14 represents the cross tabulation results for the teachers' ratings on *developing the school learning climate* (DSLC) on the PIMRS and student achievement in reading/English/language arts (RELA). Table 15 represents the cross tabulation results for the teachers' ratings on *developing the school learning climate (DSLC)* on the PIMRS and student achievement in mathematics (Math).

Table 14

Cross-tabulation of Developing the School Learning Climate (DSLC) Dimension of the

PIMRS and Student Achievement in Reading/English/Language Arts (RELA)

			Teachers' Ratings Level		
			Low	High	Total
DSLC	Low	Count	3	11	14
		Expected Count	4.4	9.6	14.0
		% within DSLC	21.4%	78.6%	100%
		% within RELA	21.1%	39.3%	34.1%
		% of Total	7.3%	26.8%	34.1%
	Medium	Count	5	9	14
		Expected Count	4.4	9.6	14.0
		% within DSLC	35.7%	64.3%	100%
		% within RELA	38.5%	32.1%	34.1%
		% of Total	12.2%	22.0%	34.1%
	High	Count	5	8	13
		Expected Count	4.1	8.9	13.0
		% within DSLC	38.5%	61.5%	100%
		% within RELA	38.5%	28.6%	31.7%
		% of Total	12.2%	19.5%	31.7%

Table 15

Cross-tabulation of Developing the School Learning Climate (DSLC) Dimension of the

PIMRS and Student Achievement in Mathematics (Math)

			Teachers' Ratings Level		
			Low	High	Total
DSLC	Low	Count	9	14	23
		Expected Count	11.0	12.0	23.0
		% within DSLC	39.1%	60.9%	100%
		% within Math	27.3%	38.9%	33.3%
		% of Total	13.0%	20.3%	33.3%
	Medium	Count	8	15	23
		Expected Count	11.0	12.0	23.0
		% within DSLC	34.8%	65.2%	100%
		% within Math	24.2%	41.7%	33.3%
		% of Total	11.6%	21.7%	33.3%
	High	Count	16	7	23
		Expected Count	11.0	12.0	23.0
		% within DSLC	69.6%	30.4%	100%
		% within Math	48.5%	19.4%	33.3%
		% of Total	23.2%	10.1%	33.3%

To assess the nature and the strength of the relationship between teacher ratings on the three leadership dimensions of the PIMRS and student achievement in the highest achieving and the lowest achieving theme schools as evidenced by the percent of students who met or exceeded the standard on the Reading/English/Language Arts CRCT and the Mathematics CRCT, a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis was conducted. Considering research question number one that examined leadership behaviors relative to *defining the school mission,* there was no correlation evident between the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS dimension *defining the school mission* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts. There was a medium negative correlation between the variables, *defining the school mission* and student achievement in mathematics, $r = -.37$, $n = 41$, $p < .05$.

To examine research question number two which explored leadership behaviors relative to *managing the instructional program,* a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis was conducted. A medium negative correlation between the variables, *managing the instructional program* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts was found, $r = -38$, $n = 41$, $p < .05$. No correlation was evident between the variables *managing the instructional program* and student achievement in mathematics.

Research question number three was concerned with leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* which is the third dimension of the PIMRS. To determine whether a correlation existed between the variables of *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts and

mathematics, a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis was conducted. No

correlation was evident with respect to the variables of leadership behaviors and student

achievement in reading/English/language arts. There was a small negative correlation

between the two variables, r = -.25, n = 69, p < .05, with low teacher ratings of

developing the learning climate associated with school that have highest mean student

achievement in mathematics. Table 16 illustrates the negative correlations between the

three sets of variables, *defining the school mission* and student achievement in

mathematics, *managing the instructional program* and student achievement in

reading/English/language arts, as well as *developing the school learning climate* and

mathematics.

Table 16

Spearman Rank Order Correlations between Student Achievement and the Three

Dimensions of the PIMRS

	Measure	1	2	3	4
RELA	1. Student Ach.			-.37*	-.38*
	2. DSM			--	
	3. MIP				--
Math	1. Student Ach.	--	-.25*		
	4. DSLC		--		

*p <.05 (2-tailed)

Quantitative Data Analysis

The researcher performed two Chi-square tests for independence. This cross tabulation was designed to determine if there was a significant relationship between the teachers' ratings of their principals (low, medium, and high) in the highest and lowest achieving schools on the three dimensions of the PIMRS. This cross-tabulation was used to determine if two categorical variables were related. Variable A used in this analysis was the teacher ratings on the PIMRS. Variable A had three levels (categories) corresponding to the teachers' ratings of low, medium, and high on the PIMRS. Variable B was the student achievement for the traditional theme schools. Two levels for this variable consisted of the highest achieving school and the lowest achieving school on the CRCT administered in 2011. The Chi-square indicates whether or not variable A can help predict variable B. There was a significant relationship between the teachers' ratings on *managing the instructional program* and student achievement in the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts. There was no significant relationship between the teacher ratings and the dimensions *defining the school mission* and *developing the school learning climate*. In these cases the Chi-square cross-tabulation analysis determined the independence of these variables.

The same statistical procedure was repeated for the highest and lowest performing schools in mathematics. A significant relationship was found between the teacher ratings on *developing the school learning climate* and the highest and lowest achieving schools in mathematics. No significant relationship between the teacher ratings on the dimensions, *managing the instructional program* and *defining the school mission* were indicated. The Chi-square cross-tabulation analysis indicated that these variables were

independent. Even though a relationship between student achievement and the teacher ratings on the PIMRS was evident for the dimension *managing the instructional program* for reading/English/language arts, it does not mean that the one variable caused the other. Similarly, the relationship that was found between student achievement and the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for the dimension developing the school climate for mathematics, does not mean that variable A caused variable B.

The researcher also performed a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis to assess the nature and the strength of the teachers' ratings on the dimensions of the PIMRS and the student achievement as evidenced by the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts and mathematics. The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis assumes a monotonic relationship between the variables. As one set of variables increases, so does the other, or as one set of variables decreases so does the other set. The inverse relationship is also possible as one set of variables may increase while the other set decreases. The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis supported the relationship indicated by the Chi-square between student achievement and the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS in the dimension *managing the instructional program.* In fact, the Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis characterized the correlation as being medium and negative. This test also supported the descriptive statistics analysis that indicated that the highest achieving school in reading/English/language arts had the lowest teacher ratings in the dimension *managing the instructional program*. Similarly, the lowest achieving school in reading/English/language arts had the highest ratings on the dimension *managing the instructional program.* The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis also revealed a

medium, negative correlation between student achievement in the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts and the PIMRS dimension *defining the school mission.* Although this relationship was not detected by the Chi-square, it is evident in the analysis of the descriptive statistics because the highest achieving school has the lowest ratings on the PIMRS and the lowest achieving school has the highest ratings on the PIMRS on the dimension *defining the school mission.*

The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis also indicated a small negative correlation between student achievement at the highest and lowest achieving schools in mathematics and the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS on the dimension *developing the school learning climate.* This was also consistent with the relationship identified by the Chi-Square between the same variables. The analysis of the descriptive data also indicated an inverse or negative relationship between the student achievement and that particular dimension of the PIMRS. The highest achieving school had the lowest PIMRS ratings and the lowest achieving school had the highest PIMRS ratings.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative portion of the study was framed around research question number four: What principal behaviors and practices are instrumental in defining the mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate in the traditional theme schools? Specific information and examples of the identified categories of school leadership added another lens used to examine the nature and strength of leadership actions that were related to the accomplishment and sustenance of high student achievement in these predominately African American schools.

Participants.

In the second phase of the study, interviews were conducted with the principals of the five elementary traditional theme schools. The principals who were interviewed were the leaders of the five elementary traditional theme schools. The principals have been leading the traditional theme schools for three to ten years. They all had 15 or more years of service in the school district as teachers, counselors, assistant principals and principals. All of the five principals are African American. Four of the principals are female and one is male. Four of the principals have doctorate degrees in educational leadership and one has completed all but the dissertation toward her doctoral degree.

Table 17 presents demographics about each of the traditional theme school principals including their race, gender, years of educational experience, highest degree held, age of their respective traditional theme schools, and title I status of their schools.

Table 17

Demographic Information about the Traditional Theme School Principals

Schs.	Race	Gender	Yrs. Exp.	Degree	Age of Sch.	Title I
TTS #1	AA	Female	25+	Ed. D.	16	no
TTS #2	AA	Female	25+	ABD	16	yes
TTS #3	AA	Male	15+	Ed.D.	13	no
TTS #4	AA	Female	15+	Ed.D.	11	no
TTS #5	AA	Female	30+	Ed.D.	12	yes

Principal number one has a long career with the school district as a teacher, school counselor, assistant principal and principal. She has been the principal of the theme school for three years. She has earned a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Traditional Theme School number one has been in existence for 16 years. It is one of the larger schools in the district with a student population of nearly 900 students. The students live in four bordering school attendance zones. The school has a student population that is over 60% eligible for free and/or reduced meals. The school fell slightly short of meeting the eligibility for a Title I school.

Principal number two also has a long professional career with the school district. She has served as a special education teacher, school counselor, assistant principal, and principal. She has been leading the theme school for 10 years. She is all but dissertation (ABD) in a program leading to a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. This school has also been in existence for 16 years. The students come from four neighboring school attendance zones. It is one of the largest elementary schools in the district with nearly 900 students. The school is a Title I school with 67% of its student population eligible for free and/or reduced meals.

The principal of theme school number three is a mid-career professional with a background as a physical education teacher, assistant principal and principal. He has been the principal of the theme school for five years. He has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. He also has a unique history with the traditional theme school initiative. His mother was the district leader who conceptualized and implemented the traditional theme school choice initiative 16 years ago. He also served as the school's physical education teacher when the school first opened 13 years ago. The nearly 1000 students come from

three neighboring elementary school attendance zones. The school has approximately

50% free and/or reduced meals eligible students.

The fourth principal is also a mid-career professional with district experience as a

teacher, assistant principal, and a principal. She has been the principal of the theme

school for 6 years. She has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. The school has been

open for 11 years and has nearly 1000 students. The students reside in four neighboring

elementary school attendance zones.   The school's student population has about 43% of

the students eligible for free and/or reduced meals.

The principal of the fifth theme school has a long professional career with the

school district. She has served as a teacher, assistant principal and a principal. She is

currently serving in her third year as principal of the theme school. She has a Doctorate

in Educational Leadership. This school is a medium-sized school with a student

population of nearly 500 students and has been a traditional theme school for 12 years.

This school is a Title I school with 80% of the students eligible for free or reduced meals.

The students come from 10 area elementary school attendance zones. Another unique

feature of this traditional theme school's student population is the large number of

international and refugee students that attend. Nearly 20% of the student population

receives English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) service.

The researcher interviewed five traditional theme school principals asking them to

explain how they implement leadership practices characteristic of the ten subscales of

leadership according to the PIMRS instrument. The principals were questioned on

leadership behaviors relative to framing and communicating the school mission and

goals. They were asked to characterize their instructional leadership in terms of

managing the instruction program including supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The researcher posed questions to the principals concerning their leadership efforts to develop the school learning climate. The principals described the protection of instructional time, the maintenance of visibility, incentives for teachers, promotion of professional learning, and incentives for student learning. The principals described their leadership initiatives and programs by defining and explaining specific examples of leadership efforts from their respective schools. They elaborated on the direct and indirect effects that the initiatives and programs had on student achievement.

Emerging themes.

The responses of the principals to the interview questions were classified into two categories of information. The first type of information offered by the principals was behaviors, practices, and protocols that are integral to the role of the principal as the instructional leader of the school. The principal as the instructional leader being instrumental to student achievement, was the first emerging theme from the interview transcripts. Other pertinent information offered by the principals could be categorized as collaborative efforts with internal and external stakeholders to create and maintain a supportive and positive learning climate in the school. The second emerging theme was the principal as the advocate for a supportive and positive school learning climate being instrumental to student achievement.

An examination of the principals' comments that reveal the nature of the role of instructional leader of the school include behaviors to frame and communicate the school mission and goals. For example, one principal illustrated the framing of the mission and

goals as follows: "I believe that the goals and the mission of the school are vital to the success of our students because that sets the standards for excellence. Our goal is to make sure that we create an opportunity for all of our children to be successful." The communication of the mission and goals was also asked in the context of direction-setting for the purpose of promoting student achievement. "We like to believe that our communication definitely has a significant effect on our students' success. The more the students and the parents in the community are equipped with what is going on, the more they have the opportunity to participate and volunteer." Five out of five of the principals expressed that the mission set the standard and united the stakeholders in pursuit of excellence for all of the students. The mission statements of the schools emphasize high achievement, developing individual potential, and supporting students with a school, parent, and community partnership. The principals described various communication channels that they used with the students, parents, and community. Included were the closed circuit TV broadcasts of morning announcements, PTA meetings, School Council sessions, staff meetings and workshops, websites, flyers, emails, student programs and performances, calling posts, and emails. The most powerful communication vehicle that the principals reported was the communication loop that developed and circulated among the students, parents, and the school. The collaborative efforts among the stakeholder groups to act in concert to accomplish the mission and achieve the goals were believed to be supportive of the culture of high academic achievement. Common descriptive phrases that were evident among the principals' transcripts were *student success, educational opportunities*, *blueprint for success*, *shared expectations*, and *parent-community partnership.*

Another leadership behavior that the principals reported as integral to their role of instructional leader of the school was supervision and evaluation of the instructional program and the effects on student achievement. One principal spoke of a multi-faceted approach to instructional supervision that included "…constant progress monitoring, focus walks, benchmark assessment, conferences with our teachers, conferences with our parents…We conference with our students to insure that they have comprehended, mastered the standards." They all mentioned a standard fare of achievement indicators that the school district recommended that all schools utilize including formal and informal classroom observations, formative and summative data, and comparable state and nation test score data. The behaviors and practices that the principals described most enthusiastically were the focus walks, benchmark data, being visible, and using professional learning to prepare the teachers to teach the standards who in turn meet the needs of the students. Five out of five of the principals communicated the value and belief that the instructional programs at the traditional theme schools were data-driven. One principal explained how consistently monitoring and sharing the data helped the school address leading and lagging indicators throughout the school year. Another principal stressed the importance of giving students feedback on their performance and progress.

The principals elaborated further on their efforts to coordinate the curriculum in the context of the extremely high test scores on the annual Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). One principal explained that the strength was as follows: "The teachers are involved and they have their students engage in activities that are challenging, that are performanced-based, and that students are able to justify and defend

their answers…we are asking open-ended questions, so our students have that opportunity to utilize critical thinking skills." The principals expressed that professional learning in-services and workshops were key components in building teacher capacity to teach the curriculum. Two of the principals also emphasized the parent workshops explaining the role of the Parent University as part of the mandatory 16 hours of parental volunteer service. This was designed to help parents play an active part in supporting their children's education. One principal explained the success of the students as reflected in the standardized test scores to the use of challenging learning activities that require students to defend and justify their answers. Another principal explained the value of allowing the teachers flexibility to try new ideas in the classroom. He supported teachers' professional judgment to experiment, succeed or fail, and learn from their mistakes. Another principal expressed the power in allowing teachers to share among their colleagues the successful strategies that worked with their students. Key phases that were repeated by the principals were *model expectations*, *culture of success, buy into the vision,* and *everyone plays an active part*.

Monitoring student progress and the impact on student achievement was also part of the role of the principal as the instructional leader of the schools as offered by the principals. One principal explained the importance of the students being included in the monitoring and feedback loop. "We monitor progress by looking at the test score data and analyzing it and sharing with the teachers and asking them to share it with the parents and their students. A lot of times we leave the student component out of it and they don't know where they are, they don't know how what they did, they don't know where they need to go." Two of the principals spoke of technology resources that assisted in the

monitoring of student progress. Technology included the use of the Integrated Data

Management System (IDMS), a desktop dashboard on student data updated in real time,

STAR reading, STAR math, and the Accelerated Reader (AR). The principals attributed

a portion of the student success to the access and participation in the student tutorial

sessions. In some the schools the tutorials are morning academies, after school sessions,

and/or Saturday school. One principal stressed her support and implementation of

teacher-made common assessments. Another principal valued the use of data

accountable talks between individual teachers and an administrator. And several

mentioned the power of talking to students about the students' work samples. It was

stated that students must be able to articulate what they are learning. And finally another

strength in the theme school efforts that supported the principals as the instructional

leader was the effectiveness of the leadership team. One principal elaborated on the

strength and cohesiveness of the leadership team at her school. She expressed that it was

a great advantage to the students, parents, and staff to have a supportive leadership

structure that operated with unified purpose and spoke from a single point of view.

The second theme that emerged from the interview information shared by the

theme school principals was the principals as the advocate for a supportive and positive

school learning climate. Leadership behaviors and practices described by the principals

included protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for

teachers and students, providing professional learning opportunities for staff and parents,

and coordinating parent and community involvement in the school. The importance of

protecting and channeling instructional time was explained by one of the principals.

"Protecting instructional day and block has significant impact on student achievement.

Every minute of the day is needed even more so, I wish we had a little bit longer school day. But we are just trying to minimize any disruptions we have…" . They shared a common set of policies that maximized uninterrupted classroom instruction that entailed doing closed circuit TV or announcements once a day, using emails to communicate updates to staff, bell to bell teaching, and working on student transition (arrival, lunch, changing classes, and dismissal), so that it progressed efficiently. They emphasized the importance of engaging students in meaningful learning activities that required knowledge on Bloom's taxonomy's higher levels of learning. They also limited student programs and assemblies to those that enhanced the curriculum standards. Additionally, a parent visitation and conference policy was strictly enforced. Parents were permitted to visit classrooms throughout the instructional day for observation only. All parent conferences must take place before and after the instructional day. The principals relayed that these common practices and policies created the opportunity for effective classroom instruction.

Leadership behaviors for the purpose of maintaining visibility was an area that all principals commented. "Maintaining visibility for me is not a hard challenge because I believe that the more you're visible to the student clientele, the more they know that they are number one, you're there to support them. They can talk to you, you are accessible and you can actually see what's going on as opposed to someone being able to tell you what's going on and having a subjective picture of what's been going on instead of seeing it yourself." This perspective explains the direct effect that students may feel from enhanced principal visibility. They all listed a set of common practices that they used to stay in touch with their internal stakeholders. Those included meeting and greeting

students and parents in the morning during arrival, visiting with students in the cafeteria during lunch, visiting teachers and students in classrooms daily, and operating with an open-door policy for staff, students, and parents during the day. One principal mentioned the importance of attending all co-curricular and extra curricular activities. She explained "my students and parents expected to see me there". Two principals appeared on the televised morning announcements and others read the Principal's Book of the Month to the students. Another principal actively participated in awarding reward coupons to students and staff who go above and beyond the norm to contribute to the efforts of the school.

Incentives for teachers and students were characterized as strategies that not only rewarded academic performance, but a tool for enhancing the school learning climate. One principal explained the teacher incentive program at the school as such: "Our incentive for our teachers, we call celebrations. And we recognize our teacher as often as possible, specifically during our faculty meetings. It's important for me to take the time. And we begin each faulty meeting with a celebration". "We can't do it all, but I think if a teacher feels valued and appreciated, then that could be transferred into the classroom." Another principal linked the teacher recognitions with the students as follows: "We do give teachers quite a few incentives and you know who gets excited about it? The students!" Most principals described recognitions for staff for birthdays, holidays, and attendance. They expressed that it was important to recognize their staff for personal and professional milestones. One principal held celebrations to mark educational and professional accomplishments of her staff. Others used the teacher of the month to recognize outstanding contributions. Several principals revealed that one of the most

popular rewards for staff members was the use of the jeans coupons and the early leave coupons. Also drawings for gift certificates were positively received by the schools' staffs. Another principal awarded a prestigious team of the year recognition to an exemplary group of teachers that included an expense paid trip for the group. As the principals described their incentive programs, the most commonly used words were *appreciated* and *valued* which were the main purposes driving the incentive programs.

Principals also had the opportunity to elaborate on their student incentives for learning. The student responses to the incentives were expressed by two of the principal as follows: "Our students get so excited about the incentives. We have student of the month. Each month we take a group photo…and post them all on our wall so everyone can see who were the students of the month." And likewise "Oh, of course, any time students feel they can be rewarded for academic progress, their eyes brighten up." All principals elaborated on common awards that recognized students' academic accomplishments and those behaviors and practices that support student achievement, for example, attendance and citizenship as well as honor roll, reading awards, math problem of the day, sight word mastery, and multiplication table competence. Most schools have PTA or business and/or community partners that purchase certificates, trophies, and other tangible awards for students who are recognized for many accomplishments. Other popular incentives used by various principals included a point system, coupons, gift certificates for Chick-fil-A® or McDonalds®, a student of the month group photo, popcorn parties, pizza celebrations, and ice cream treats. The semester and annual Honors Day programs were a structure that all principals reported as being the most effective in motivating and rewarding students for academic success.

Other aspects of leadership that illustrated the principals' efforts to develop a supportive and positive learning climate included the importance of the parental and community involvement at the theme schools. One principal spoke of the after-school and weekend social activities that allowed the students, families, and staff the opportunity to get to know each other better and to bond around the shared interest of their children's education. Another principal discussed the importance of following the students when they completed their elementary education at the traditional theme school. He explained that he and some staff members follow-up and attend some of the local middle school and high school events where their former students are matriculating. In turn, many of the former students come back to the theme school and volunteer in their former elementary school. This phenomenon has created a 360 degree network of support. Also one principal explained that the low number of discipline problems in the school was mainly due to the communication of parent expectations to their children. Generally, the principals characterized the collaborative efforts of the home and school as being a key factor in the collective success of the theme school initiative and the individual students' academic achievement. Common phrases that were used by the various principals to express the success of the theme schools were *student-centered efforts*, *high expectations*, *rigorous learning activities*, and *vested interest*.

During the interview process the researcher noted facial expressions, body posture, gestures, and voice inflection that contributed to the meaning of the interview responses. All of the principals were warm, friendly, and eager to share the success and challenges of their schools. They spoke enthusiastically with gestures, smiles, and conviction in their voices. The principals of TTS #1 and TTS #3 answered the questions

with passion in their voices and elaborated extensively with numerous examples of leadership behaviors and detailed descriptions of the schools' successful programs. Interestingly, TTS #1 and TTS #3 were the lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts (93.5%) and mathematics (83.6%) respectively.

The Qualitative Findings Inform the Quantitative Results

Research question number one investigated the principals' leadership behaviors for framing the school mission and how that fosters the culture of high academic achievement for African American students in the traditional theme schools. The PIMRS mean data indicated that the teachers rated the principals as engaging in the related behaviors ranging from *almost always* to *frequently* in all five schools (4.65, 4.52, 4.37, 4.36, 4.30). The principals' interview data supported the high ratings of the teachers on the evidence of the leadership behaviors to frame and communicate the mission and goals of the schools. The detailed examples of the mission and goals driving the instructional program of the schools and the many communication channels that five out of five of the principals referenced illustrated the positive impact that direction-setting leadership had on student achievement.

Research question number two inquired about the principals' leadership behaviors in managing the instructional program including supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress and how those behaviors foster the culture of high African American student achievement at the traditional theme schools. The teachers' ratings of the corresponding dimension on the PIMRS indicated that the teacher perceptions of the principals' instructional leadership behaviors were highly evident. The schools' mean scores were 4.55, 4.37, 4.35, 4.34, and 4.31 which is

in the range of *almost always* to *frequently*. The principals' interviews supported and further amplified the perceptions of the teachers with respect to instructional leadership. Five out of five of the principals detailed initiatives and protocols that they use to manage the instructional program.

Research question number three questioned the principals' behaviors to develop the school learning climate. Specific areas of inquiry were protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for student learning. The teachers' perceptions of the principals' behaviors in this dimension ranged from *frequently* to *sometimes*. The mean scores of the schools were 4.19, 4.16, 4.15, 4.01, and 3.73. The principals' interview responses were revealing and informative. Several leadership behaviors were well-illustrated by the principals. Some areas were not well-represented in the interviews and those leadership behaviors were rated lower by the teachers. Example behaviors that received low ratings and less attention in the interviews include tutoring students, covering classes, writing personal memos for teachers' files for commendable performances, and giving consequences to tardy and truant students.

The researcher also examined the interview transcripts to determine if support existed to explain the results of the inferential statistics. The Chi-square test revealed statistically significant relationships between the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS dimension *managing the instructional program* when the highest achieving and lowest achieving schools were compared in student achievement in reading/English/language arts. Also a statistically significant relationship confirmed by the Chi-square test for the teachers' rating on the dimension *developing the school learning climate* when the

highest and lowest achieving schools were compared in student achievement in

mathematics. To determine the nature and strength of the relationship, a Spearman Rank

Order correlational analysis was performed. The Spearman test indicated the teachers'

responses on the dimensions *defining the school mission* and *managing the instructional*

program demonstrated a medium negative correlation to the student achievement

variables for the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts.

Similarly, the Spearman test indicated that the teachers' responses to the PIMRS

dimension *developing the school learning climate* evidenced a small negative correlation

to the student achievement variables for the highest and lowest achieving schools in

mathematics.

To examine the negative correlation, or the inverse relationships between student

achievement and teacher perceptions of leadership as indicated by their rating on the

PIMRS, the mean teacher responses were calculated by dimension on the PIMRS and

presented by school in Table 18. The three dimensions of the PIMRS are presented in the

table and named as follows: *defining the school mission* (DSM), *managing the*

instructional program (MIP), and *developing the school learning climate* (DSLC).

Traditional Theme School (TTS) #1 reflected the highest mean scores in two out of the

three dimensions of the PIMRS (4.65-DSM and 4.55-MIP) even though TTS #1 was the

lowest achieving school in reading/English/language arts (93.5 % met/exceeded the

standard). Conversely, TTS # 4 was the highest achieving school in

reading/English/language arts (96.3% met/exceeded the standard) but scored fourth out of

five schools in two out of three of the domains (4.36-DSM and 4.01-DSLC) on the

PIMRS. An examination of the highest scoring and lowest scoring schools in

mathematics also indicated a similar inverse relationship. TTS # 3 was the lowest

scoring in mathematics (83.6 % met/exceeded the standard) but ranked second (4.16-

DSLC) among the five schools, third (4.37-DSM) out of five schools, and fourth (4.34-

MIP) out of five schools in the PIMRS dimensions. TTS #5, the highest scoring school

in Mathematics (89.1% met/exceeded the standard) posted the lowest mean scores for all

three PIMRS dimensions (4.30-DSM, 4.31-MIP, 3.73-DSLC).

Table 18

PIMRS Mean Scores by Dimension and Traditional Theme School

	TTS#1	TTS#2	TTS#3	TTS#4	TTS#5
DSM	4.65	4.52	4.37	4.36	4.30
MIP	4.55	4.35	4.34	4.37	4.31
DSLC	4.15	4.19	4.16	4.01	3.73

The first research question addressed defining the school mission behaviors of the

principal as follows: What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between

leadership behaviors and practices relative to defining the school mission and African

American student achievement in the traditional theme school? The survey results

indicated that the teachers rated the principals high in this dimension with mean item

scores ranging from 4.59 to 4.21 corresponding with the categories of *almost always* to

frequently. The principals' interview transcripts detailed the importance and the

communication channels of the mission and vision among the stakeholders as a

foundation for the persistent culture of high academic achievement. However, the

statistical analysis confirmed a medium negative correlation existed when the teacher

ratings on the dimension *defining the school mission* were examined for the highest and

lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts. This relationship was also

evident in the examination of the descriptive statistics particularly the mean teacher

ratings on the PIMRS for each school. The principals' interviews supported the negative

correlation when the transcripts of the highest achieving school principal and the lowest

achieving school principal were compared for content, examples, depth of description,

and passion for their leadership conviction.

The second research question addressed the principal as the instructional leader of

the school.   What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the leadership

behaviors and practices relative to *managing the instructional program* and African

American student achievement in the traditional theme school? The results of the

teachers' responses to the PIMRS dimension *managing the instructional program*

indicated that the teachers perceived the principals as performing the related leadership

behaviors *almost always* to *frequently* corresponding to the mean item scores ranging

from 4.59 to 4.04. The principals' interview transcripts supported the high ratings in this

dimension with focused examples of instructional supervision and evaluation, initiatives

for the coordination of the curriculum, and protocols and procedures for monitoring

students' progress. Their illustrations were described in detail with a great deal of

enthusiasm and vigor. Conversely, the statistical analysis evidenced a medium negative

correlation between the teachers' ratings in the dimension *managing the instructional*

program in the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts.

This relationship was also evident in the examination of the descriptive statistics

particularly the mean teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for each school. An examination of the interview specifics for the highest and lowest achieving school principals supported the negative correlation. Both principals offered and explained several examples of their instructional leadership behaviors, but the difference was in the detail, passion, and conviction for student achievement. There was also a greater focus on the students in the interview with the lowest achieving school principal.

The third research question concerned the principal's role as a catalyst for developing the school learning climate. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to *developing the learning climate* and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school? The teachers' ratings of this dimension indicated that the principals demonstrated behaviors relative to developing the school learning climate ranging from *almost always* to *frequently*. There were three items that were rated close to the *sometimes* category. The overall item means for this dimension ranged from 4.57 to 3.14. The principals' interviews supported the ratings with the examples and explanations of their school-based programs and procedures related to protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for student learning. Similarly, to the other dimensions on the PIMRS, the statistical analysis of the teacher ratings on *developing the school learning climate* demonstrated a small negative correlation in the highest and lowest achieving schools in mathematics. This relationship was also evident in the examination of the descriptive statistics, particularly the mean teacher ratings on the PIMRS for each school. Further analysis of the interview transcripts of the highest and

lowest achieving schools' principals indicated evidence to support the negative correlation. Although many of the examples offered illustrated several of the leadership behaviors identified on the PIMRS, the intensity and the extent of student support systems were more prominent in the lowest achieving school. The concentration and focus on the students was also more strongly articulated by the lowest achieving school principal.

A fourth research question guided the qualitative portion of the study: What principal behaviors and practices are instrumental in defining the mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate in the traditional theme schools? This question was explored by asking 10 interview questions to the principals. Each question focused on a subscale of the PIMRS. The interview transcripts reveal responses that are characteristic of two facets of leadership. The first theme was the principal as the instructional leader of the school being instrumental to high student achievement. Principals shared and illustrated their leadership behaviors in framing and communicating the mission and goals of the school. Additionally they discussed examples of practices, initiatives, and protocols for evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The second theme that emerged from the interview responses was the principal as the advocate for a supportive and positive school learning climate being instrumental in high student achievement. The principals offered examples relative to how they protected instructional time, maintained visibility, provided incentives for teachers and students, and promoted professional learning. A strong component of their efforts was the parental and community involvement program. The principals expressed the value of parental and community involvement as a support

for students and the academic focus of the schools.

Chapter Summary

The study examined leadership behaviors in the five elementary traditional theme schools to determine their relationship to the culture of high academic achievement of their African American students. A sequential, explanatory mixed methods design was used to collect teacher perceptions and the principals' perspectives of leadership behaviors that fostered the culture of high academic achievement in the theme schools. The first phase of the study involved the examination of the teachers' survey responses. The results of the surveys indicated that the teachers perceived leadership behaviors relative to *defining the school mission* and *managing the instructional program* as evident almost always. The rated the leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* evident ranging from almost always to frequently. A Chi-square analysis for independence indicated a significant relationship between leadership behaviors relative to *managing the instructional program* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts. A Chi-square analysis for independence also revealed a significant relationship between leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* and mathematics. No relationships were indicated between leadership behaviors relative to *defining the school mission* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts or mathematics. Also, no relationship was found between leadership behaviors relative to *managing the instructional program* and student achievement in mathematics. Similarly, no relationship was indicated between leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts. Further statistical analysis using a Spearman Rank Order

correlational analysis was performed. It indicated a medium negative correlation between leadership behaviors relative to *defining the school mission* and student achievement in mathematics. A Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis was also conducted and indicated a medium negative correlation between leadership behaviors relative to *managing the learning program* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts. Similarly, a Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis indicated a small negative correlation between leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement in mathematics. The information offered by the principals in the interviews supported the teachers' ratings of the evidence of the leadership behaviors in the theme schools. The negative correlations that were evidenced by the Spearman Rank Order correlational analyses were explained by the principals in the lowest achieving schools illustrating their leadership behaviors with a more passionate tone, extensive examples, and detailed descriptions of their successful programs.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the sequential, explanatory, mixed methods study was to examine leadership behaviors in traditional theme schools and their relationship to the culture of high student achievement of African American students. The sample included teachers and principals working in five elementary traditional theme schools with predominately African American populations in one urban school district in the Southeastern United States. The quantitative component of the study was driven by the teacher survey using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) published by Hallinger (1985). The qualitative portion of the study consisted of an interview with each school principal. The teachers' perceptions as evidenced by the survey results indicated that the principals engaged in most of the identified leadership behaviors *almost always* to *frequently* on the Likert-like scale. The principals' interviews supported the high teachers' ratings. Although the sample sites were all high achieving schools, a negative correlation was evident when the highest achieving school and the lowest achieving school in reading/English/language arts and mathematics were compared relative to the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for specific dimensions of the PIMRS. The principals' interview transcripts were consistent with the higher teacher ratings in the lowest achieving schools; thereby, supporting the negative correlation. Further understanding of the relationship between leadership and student achievement for this population of students will benefit policy makers, educational practitioners, and the body of educational research because closing the achievement gaps of African American students is of crucial interest in the age of accountability.

Analysis of the Research Findings

The first phase of the sequential, explanatory mixed methods study was quantitative involving the administration of the PIMRS to teachers in the traditional theme schools. The teachers rated their principals using the PIMRS instrument which was designed to measure the frequency of selected leadership behaviors classified in three dimensions. The first research question addressed leadership behaviors relative to *defining the school mission*. The survey results indicated that the teachers rated the principals high in this dimension with mean item scores ranging from 4.59 to 4.21 corresponding with the categories of *almost always* to *frequently*. The principals' interview transcripts detailed the function and value of the communication channels of the mission and vision among the stakeholders as a foundation for the persistent culture of high academic achievement. The Chi-square statistical analysis failed to detect a relationship between the leadership behaviors measured in the dimension *defining the school mission* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts or mathematics. However, the Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis confirmed a medium negative correlation existed when the teacher ratings on the dimension, *defining the school mission* were examined for the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts. This relationship was also evident in the examination of the descriptive statistics, particularly the mean teacher ratings on the PIMRS for each school. The results of the principals' interviews supported the frequency of the leadership behaviors as rated by the teachers on the PIMRS for the dimension *defining the school mission*. The first emerging theme from the interview transcripts was the principal as the instructional leader of the school being instrumental to high student achievement. The examples, initiatives, and

accounts of the principals' roles in framing and communicating the mission and goals

substantiated the teachers' high ratings on the survey for this leadership dimension.

Furthermore, the principals' interviews supported the negative correlation when the

transcripts of the highest achieving school principal and the lowest achieving school

principal were compared for content, examples, depth of description, and passion for

their leadership conviction.

The second research question addressed leadership behaviors relative to

managing the instructional program. The results of the teachers' responses to the

PIMRS dimension *managing the instructional program* indicated that the teachers

perceived the principals as performing the related leadership behaviors *almost always* to

frequently corresponding to the mean item scores ranging from 4.59 to 4.04. The

principals' interview transcripts supported the high ratings in this dimension with focused

examples of instructional supervision and evaluation, initiatives for the coordination of

the curriculum, and protocols and procedures for monitoring students' progress. The

Chi-square statistical analysis indicated a relationship between the leadership behaviors

measured in the dimension *managing the instructional program* and student achievement

in reading/English/language arts. The Chi-square analysis failed to detect a relationship

between the leadership behaviors relative to *managing the instructional program* and

student achievement in mathematics. The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis

confirmed a medium negative correlation existed when the teacher ratings on the

dimension, *managing the instructional program* were examined for the highest and

lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts. No correlation was indicated

between leadership behaviors relative *to managing the instructional program* and student

achievement in mathematics. This relationship was also evident in the examination of the

descriptive statistics, particularly the mean teacher ratings on the PIMRS for each school.

The results of the principals' interviews supported the frequency of the leadership

behaviors as rated by the teachers on the PIMRS for the dimension *managing the*

instructional program. The first emerging theme from the interview transcripts was the

principal as the instructional leader of the school. The examples, programs, and

initiatives of the principals' role in supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating

the curriculum, and monitoring student progress supported the teachers' high ratings on

the survey for this leadership dimension. Furthermore, the principals' interviews

supported the negative correlation when the transcripts of the highest achieving school

principal and the lowest achieving school principal were compared for content, examples,

depth of description, and passion for their leadership conviction.

The third research question concerned the leadership behaviors relative to

developing the school learning climate. The teachers' ratings of this dimension indicated

that the principals demonstrated behaviors relative to *developing the school learning*

climate ranging from *almost always* to *frequently*. There were three items that were rated

closer to the *sometimes* category. The overall item means for this dimension ranged from

4.57 to 3.14. The principals' interviews supported the ratings with the examples and

explanations of their school-based programs and procedures related to protecting

instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers and students,

and promoting professional development. The Chi-square statistical analysis failed to

indicate a relationship between the leadership behaviors measured in the dimension

developing the school learning climate and student achievement in

reading/English/language arts. The Chi-square analysis indicated a significant relationship between the leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement in mathematics. The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis failed to detect any correlation between leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement in reading/English/language arts. The Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis confirmed a small negative correlation existed when the teacher ratings on the dimension, *developing the school learning climate* were examined for the highest and lowest achieving schools in mathematics. This relationship was also evident in the descriptive statistics, particularly the mean teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for each school. The results of the principals' interviews supported the frequency of the leadership behaviors as rated by the teachers on the PIMRS dimension *developing the school learning climate*. The second emerging theme from the interview transcripts was the principal as the advocate for a supportive and positive school learning climate. The programs, initiatives, and protocols of the principals' role in protecting instructional time, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for learning, promoting professional development, and facilitating the parent and community involvement efforts supported the teachers' high ratings on the survey for this leadership dimension. Furthermore, the principals' interviews explained the small negative correlation when the transcripts of the highest achieving school principal and the lowest achieving school principal were compared for content, examples, depth of description, and passion for their leadership conviction.

Discussion of Research Findings

The first research question examined the leadership behaviors of the principals related to direction-setting in terms of mission and goals for their schools. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to defining the school mission and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school? An analysis of the descriptive statistics indicated that the student achievement levels of the students in the traditional theme schools were very high for reading/English/language arts (RELA) and fairly high for mathematics (math). The schools posted scores that ranged from 96.3% to 93.5% of students met/exceeded the standard on the 2011 RELA CRCT. Similarly, the students' scores in math ranged from 89.1% to 83.6% of students met/exceeded the standard on the 2011 CRCT. The teacher ratings for the dimension *defining the school mission* were also high since they ranged from 4.59 to 4.21 which placed the ratings in the *almost always* to *frequently* categories. This study substantiated the link between school leaders who develop clear and focused missions and whose schools evidenced high academic achievement. Research supports this relationship between leadership that developed a clear and focused mission for their schools and high levels of student achievement (Lezotte, 1991; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). This study also demonstrated the relationship between leaders who set the direction for the organization and built vision for the schools and their reported improved student achievement. This relationship between direction-setting and visionary leadership was explained by research conducted by Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) and Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008). The traditional theme school study established the relationship between the principals of these schools and their

efforts to communicate and demonstrate the school mission and goals to improved

student achievement. This relationship is supported by research conducted by Papalewis

and Fortune (2003) that linked leaders who communicated, illustrated, and demonstrated

the school mission positively affected student performance. This study also pointed to

the favorable use of data to formulate the school goals. This relationship has been

evidenced by research conducted by Samuels (2010) who determined that the use of data

to develop school goals was associated with high student achievement.

Statistical analysis designed to determine the nature and strength of the

relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement was conducted by

using the Spearman Rank Order correlation analysis. This study evidenced some

noteworthy findings with respect to the nature and strength of the relationship between

leadership behaviors relative to *defining the school mission* and student achievement. No

correlation was found between the selected leadership behaviors and student achievement

in reading/English/language arts, however a medium negative correlation was indicated

between the leadership behaviors in this dimension and student achievement in

mathematics. The research linking *defining the school mission* including developing and

communicating the mission and goals was not supported by the statistical analysis that

determined that a medium, negative correlation existed between the teachers' ratings on

the PIMRS for the dimension *defining the school mission* and student achievement for the

lowest and highest achieving schools in mathematics. The student achievement

difference between the two schools was only 2.8% (highest achieving school-96.3% and

lowest achieving school-93.5%) of students who met/exceed the standard, but the mean

teacher ratings on that dimension on the PIMRS were 4.65 for the lowest achieving

school and 4.36 for the highest achieving school.

The second research question sought to examine leadership behaviors germane to *managing the instructional progr*am. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the leadership behaviors and practices relative to managing the instructional program and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school? An analysis of the descriptive statistics indicated that the student achievement levels of the students in the traditional theme schools were very high for reading/English/language arts (RELA) and fairly high for mathematics (Math). The schools posted scores that ranged from 96.3% to 93.5% of students met/exceeded the standard on the 2011 RELA CRCT. Similarly the students' scores in math ranged from 89.1% to 83.6% of students met/exceeded the standard on the 2011 CRCT. The teacher ratings for the dimension, *managing the instructional program* were also high since they ranged from 4.59 to 4.04 which placed the ratings in the *almost always* to *frequently* categories.

This study clearly illustrated a positive relationship between leadership behaviors utilized to manage the instructional program, particularly those practices that established the principal as the instructional leader of the school. Supporting this study's results is an abundance of research that substantiates the positive affect of instructional leadership and student achievement. Particular emphasis on the importance of the principal as the instructional leader of the school was articulated as a best practice for higher student achievement (Edmonds, 1970; Lezotte, 1991; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Researchers have urged leaders to change from managing school buildings to leading the school teaching and learning program to promote student progress (Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2005). This study also indicated that the frequent

presence of leadership behaviors that monitor student progress, evaluate students, and manage student data are related to high academic achievement. Research supports this relationship with findings that encourage the instructional leader of the school to take a more direct role in monitoring student progress, evaluating students, and managing student data (Edmonds, 1970; Lezotte, 1991, Papalewis & Fortune, 2003; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009; Trotter, 2007). The results of the study illustrated a positive relationship between principals' practices to coordinate the curriculum with high academic achievement. Davis et al. (2005) emphasized the principal's role in coordinating the curriculum to promote student learning. The principals in the study used several strategies to help teachers maximize the use of instructional time to promote high quality instruction and enhanced student achievement. Supporting this relationship, Sadker and Zittleman (2009) encouraged principals to assist teachers to make better use of the school day.

Statistical analysis designed to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement was conducted by using the Spearman Rank Order correlation analysis. The analysis indicated some interesting findings with respect to the nature and strength of the relationship between leadership behaviors relative to *managing the instructional program* and student achievement. A medium negative correlation was found between the selected leadership behaviors and student achievement in reading/English/language arts, however no correlation was indicated between the leadership behaviors in this dimension and student achievement in mathematics. The study relating *managing the instructional program* including supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and

monitoring student progress to high student achievement was not supported by the statistical analysis that determined that a medium, negative correlation existed between the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for the dimension *managing the instructional program* and student achievement for the lowest and highest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts. This particular statistical test to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement in reading/English/language arts was not congruent with the research. A Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis revealed that the teachers' ratings on the dimension *managing the instructional program* of the PIMRS evidenced a medium, negative correlation with the student achievement variables for the highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts. The student achievement difference between the two schools was only 5.5% (highest achieving school-89.1% and lowest achieving school-83.6%) of students who met/exceed the standard, but the mean teacher ratings on that dimension on the PIMRS were 4.55 for the lowest achieving school and 4.37 for the highest achieving school.

The third research question examined leadership behaviors relative to developing the school learning climate. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between leadership behaviors and practices relative to *developing the learning climate* and African American student achievement in the traditional theme school? An analysis of the descriptive statistics indicated that the student achievement levels of the students in the traditional theme schools were very high for reading/English/language arts and fairly high for mathematics. The schools posted scores that ranged from 96.3% to 93.5% of students met/exceeded the standard on the 2011 RELA CRCT. Similarly the students'

scores in math ranged from 89.1% to 83.6% of students met/exceeded the standard on the

2011 CRCT. The teacher ratings for the dimension *developing the school learning*

climate were fairly high since they ranged from 4.53 to 3.14 which placed the ratings in

the *almost always* to *frequently* category and the *frequently* to *sometimes* category.

This study clearly illustrates the relationship between the establishment of a safe

and orderly environment and academic achievement. This relationship is supported in

the body of research linking the school principal with efforts to establish and maintain a

positive school climate to high student achievement. Research champions a safe and

orderly school environment as being a basic premise to promote student achievement

(Edmonds, 1970; Lezotte, 1991; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). This study reveals the

efforts of the principals to create and maintain learning climates where all students can be

successful. This is affirmed by researchers who advocated for leaders who create

climates of high expectations where students are not allowed to fail (Edmonds, 1970;

Lezotte, 1991; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). The interview transcripts of the study

indicated the principals' many initiatives and protocols established to protect instructional

time and maximize the effectiveness of instruction were related to high student

achievement. The study's findings were substantiated by research that promoted the

protection of instructional time and the emphasis of time on task used to affect student

achievement (Lezotte, 1991; Papalewis & Fortune, 2003; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009).

The principal as the organizational culture leader who positively affected the learning

climate of the school is another idea prevalent in the analysis of the interview transcripts.

This is supported in the literature by research that concluded that in order to promote

student learning, principals are encouraged to transform their schools into educational

institutions that are powerful resources for student learning (Davis et al., 2005; Gamage, Adams, & McCormack, 2009). Principals in this study employed several strategies to promote professional development of their school staffs. Research reports the importance of professional development for teachers and the direct affect that a highly qualified and state certified teacher may have on student learning (Reese, 2008; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009; Trotter, 2007). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) claimed that principals affect student achievement indirectly and do so with their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. The importance of the principals' visibility was linked in this study to fostering the culture of high academic achievement. This is also echoed in the research that stated that visibility and daily interactions with students are linked with improved student achievement as documented in a study conducted by Trotter (2007).

Statistical analysis designed to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between leadership behaviors and student achievement was conducted by using the Spearman Rank Order correlation analysis. The analysis evidenced findings with respect to the nature and strength of the relationship between leadership behaviors relative to *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement. No correlation was found between the selected leadership behaviors and student achievement in reading/English/language arts, however a small negative correlation was indicated between the leadership behaviors in this dimension and student achievement in mathematics. The study relating *developing the school learning climate* to high student achievement was not supported by the statistical analysis that determined that a medium, negative correlation existed between the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS for the

dimension *developing the school learning climate* and student achievement for the lowest

and highest achieving schools in mathematics. This particular statistical test to determine

the nature and strength of the relationship between leadership behaviors and student

achievement in mathematics was not congruent with the research. A Spearman Rank

Order correlational analysis revealed that the teachers' ratings on the dimension of the

PIMRS, *developing the school learning climate* evidenced a small negative correlation

with the student achievement variables for the highest and lowest achieving schools in

mathematics. The student achievement difference between the two schools was only

5.5% (highest achieving school-89.1% and lowest achieving school-83.6%) of students

who met/exceed the standard, but the mean teacher ratings on that dimension on the

PIMRS were 4.16 for the lowest achieving school and 3.73 for the highest achieving

school.

The fourth research question was designed to encompass the qualitative portion of

the study. What principal behaviors and practices are instrumental in defining the

mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the learning climate in the

traditional theme schools? The principals identified and discussed several other

leadership practices and programs that they observed having an effect on the culture of

high academic achievement for their African American students. The principals'

interview statements were categorized into two emerging themes. The first theme was

the principal as the instructional leader of the school. The examples, programs, and

initiatives that were detailed by the principals illustrated their efforts to communicate and

frame the mission and vision as a set of leadership practices advantageous to high

academic performance. This relationship was supported in the research that emphasized

the importance of direction-setting behaviors of the principal and high student achievement (Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Lezotte, 1991; Papalewis & Fortune, 2003; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Emerging theme number one also includes leadership behaviors that manage the instructional program such as supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. The principals shared examples of programs, initiatives, and interventions that they employed as the instructional leader of the school to support and maintain the culture of high academic achievement in the schools. Research supports this study's findings that the instructional leadership of the schools was related to the culture of high student achievement as concluded by Edmonds (1970), Davis et al. (2005), Leithwood et al. (2005), Lezotte (1991), and Sadker and Zittleman (2009). This study demonstrated the relationship between the efforts of the principals to coordinate the curriculum with high student achievement. This relationship was identified and supported in the research by emphasizing the importance of the principal's role as the curriculum leader of the school (Davis et al., 2005). Also, the principals' efforts to monitor student progress using evaluation strategies and data management are evidenced in this study. Monitoring student progress was supported in the literature as being an important role of the instructional leader of the school in order to affect student achievement (Edmonds, 1970; Lezotte, 1991; Papalewis & Fortune, 2003; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009; Trotter, 2007). The study also pointed to the success of cohesive leadership among the leadership team as effective element of the principal's instructional leadership. Leadership models such as this one that is based on shared leadership, collective leadership, or distributed leadership has been linked to student achievement (Samuels, 2010; Yeung, Lee, & Yue,

2006). Likewise, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) urged school leaders to empower members of their staff.

The second emerging theme was the principal as an advocate for a supportive and positive school learning climate being instrumental to high student achievement. This study illustrated the relationship between the principals' role in protecting instructional time and student performance. This was supported by research that linked the protection of instructional time with student achievement (Lezotte, 1991; Papalewis & Fortune, 2003; Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). The principals also explained beliefs that visibility plays in important role in promoting a learning climate that is conducive to academic success for students. The research also supports this relationship that links visibility and the principal's daily interactions with students with improved student achievement (Trotter, 2007). Another important finding extracted from the interview transcripts was the principals' belief that the parental and community involvement program at the traditional theme schools was directly linked with the culture of high academic achievement. One principal spoke of the after-school and weekend social activities that allowed the students, families, and staff the opportunity to get to know each other better and to bond around the shared interest of their children's education. The power of parental and community involvement in school and its positive effect on student achievement is evident in the literature. The collective and collaborative efforts of the schools, parents and community was advocated by Reese (2008) and Sadker and Zittleman (2009).   The study also emphasized the affects that community partnerships have on creating and maintaining a school learning climate conducive to students' academic success. Another principal discussed the importance of following the students

when they completed their elementary education at the traditional theme school. He

explained that he and some staff members followed up and attended some of the local

middle school and high school events where their former students are matriculating. In

turn, many of the former students came back to the theme school and volunteered in their

former elementary school. This phenomenon has created a 360 degree network of

support has been a catalyst for student achievement. These types of relationships are

emphasized in the research that concluded that authentic stakeholder partnerships based

on trust promoted student achievement (Lezotte, 1991). An important finding of the

study was based on the principals' characterization the collaborative efforts of the home

and school as being a key factor in the collective success of the theme school initiative

and the individual student's academic achievement. Research supported this important

finding by suggesting that school and parent expectations have been powerful forces

increasing student success (Lezotte, 1991; Papalewis & Fortune, 2003; Reese, 2008;

Sadler & Zittleman, 2009). Jacobson (2011) characterized the sustained success of a

school that continued throughout leadership changes and transitions did so by building

quality relationships based on a shared commitment.

Conclusions

The most prominent conclusion drawn from the data is the relationship between

high student achievement as illustrated by the CRCT scores with the quantitative results

and the qualitative findings. The student achievement levels evidenced by the theme

school students range from 83.6% to 96.3% of the student met/exceeded the standard.

This is considerably higher than the mean scores in the school district and the state. (see

Table 1 and Table 5) The teachers' ratings on the PIMRS indicated that the teachers'

perceptions attributed most of the selected leadership behaviors to the principals *almost always* to *frequently* on the Likert-like scale. Only a few leadership behaviors were rated in the *frequently* to *sometimes* category. (see Table 7, Table 8, and Table 9) The transcripts of the principals' interviews reflect details and descriptions of leadership initiatives, programs, and practices that amplified and illustrated the leadership dimensions, subscales, and items on the PIMRS. In this sample population of predominately African American elementary traditional theme schools, the student achievement levels, as evidenced state-mandated test scores, exceeded the state test scores. The state test scores represent a student population that is predominately Caucasian.

The traditional theme school data revealed a few leadership protocols and practices to be major factors in maintaining the culture of high achievement. The principals' multi-dimensional role as the instructional leader of the theme school was a powerful force in maintaining and establishing a culture of high student achievement. The set of instructional behaviors including supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress all had a pronounced use of data. Data are collected and analyzed at all levels from the students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Data are used to formulate the school mission, as well as to develop the annual goals. Instruction and curriculum implementation were data-driven. Monitoring student progress included formative and summative data collection and analysis. Data logging tracked numbers of parent volunteer hours and hours of professional development for the staff. One principal characterized the data analysis as "a continuous process of examining leading and lagging indicators to enhance student

achievement". The researcher has concluded that the strong approach to managing the

instructional program supported with the prevalent use of data positively impacted the

student achievement levels evidenced by the theme schools.

Just as instructional leadership was key to the success of the schools, the parental

involvement program was described as a cornerstone to the success of the theme schools.

Each parent committed 16 hours of volunteer service to the schools annually. Because

parents have requested additional training so that their service might be more targeted

and focused on the schools' initiatives, a parent university has been instituted in a few of

the schools. This allows the parent to attended trainings and workshops specially

designed and delivered to meet the needs of the parents. These hours counted toward the

16 hour requirement for volunteer service. One principal attributed the parental

involvement program and the high expectations of the parents as the major component of

the theme schools' success. She attributed the academic achievement of the students and

the lack of disciplinary problems in the school to the active support and high expectations

of the parents.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that leadership made a

positive difference in the attainment of high student achievement. Academic success has

a complex set of related factors, and even subtle differences could affect student

achievement. The descriptive data and the interview transcripts supported a high

incidence of the identified effective leadership behaviors and high student achievement.

Conversely, when the statistical analysis was performed, there was a negative correlation

between student achievement and specified domains of the PIMRS. Instead of the two

variables increasing or decreasing on the same trajectory, as student achievement

increased, teachers' ratings on the PIMRS decreased. The first problem with this analysis is the classification of the highest achieving and the lowest achieving schools. In reading/English/language arts, only a 2.8 % difference existed between the highest and lowest achieving schools. Similarly, a difference of 5.5% was evidenced between the highest and lowest achieving schools in mathematics. It is difficult to term a school with a 93.5% or an 83.6% met/exceeded the standard rate a low achieving school. But for the purpose of the statistical analysis, the schools were assigned that category descriptor. To understand the subtle differences between the teachers' rating of the highest and lowest achieving schools, the interview transcripts were extremely valuable. To determine the differences between the interview data for the highest and lowest performing schools it was noted that the principals of TTS #1 and TTS #3 answered the questions with passion in their voices and elaborated extensively with numerous examples of leadership behaviors and detailed descriptions of the schools' successful programs. This provided the researcher with some additional insight as to why the teachers' ratings on the PIMRS were negatively correlated with respect to the highest and lowest achieving schools. In the final analysis, it is difficult to differentiate the traditional theme schools using student achievement levels because their levels are so closely clustered in the middle 90s for reading/English/language arts, and the mid to upper 80s for mathematics.

The third conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that leadership is an important factor that impacted student achievement. According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) leadership plays an important role in determining the influence on student learning. This study confirms that there is a relationship between leadership behaviors and African American student achievement, but it also illustrated that there are

other factors that must have affected student achievement. This was particularly evident from the statistical analysis that revealed the negative correlation between the student achievement levels and the teacher perceptions on the PIMRS. The nature of this relationship was confirmed by the interview data. It is obvious that the success of the theme schools must have be attributed to several factors or the combined efforts of many factors, and leadership behaviors and practice is no doubt a primary factor. Due to the complex interplay of numerous factors, educational studies have difficulty determining causation. Most educational studies may suggest relationships or even correlation effects. When examined as a whole the student achievement data in this study was related to the leadership behaviors as evidenced by the teachers' ratings on the leadership behaviors and practices and reinforced by the principals' interview transcripts. But the Spearman Rank Order correlational analysis comparing and contrasting the individual schools indicated subtle differences that were not explained with the research. The medium, negative correlation between the schools highest and lowest achieving schools in reading/English/language arts and the dimensions *defining the school mission* and *managing the instructional program* were inconsistent with the body of research. The small, negative correlation evidenced by the highest and lowest achieving schools with the teachers' rating in the PIMRS dimension, *developing the school learning climate* was also not supported in the research.

For this particular sample, which was a group of schools belonging to a specialized public school choice initiative, the analysis or conclusions can be characterized on two levels. An overall or macro view of the data indicated a relationship between student achievement and leadership behaviors. A more specific, statistical

analysis or a micro view revealed an inverse relationship between the schools with respect to student achievement and leadership behaviors and practices. Because the numerical data are so closely clustered and the interview themes are so similar, the researcher urges caution with the interpretation of these results.

Implications

This study offers a contribution to the field of educational administration to improve educational practice. Educational researchers and practitioners search for solutions that may level the playing field for African American students. The traditional theme school initiative is a set of public schools that have experience remarkable success in closing the achievement gap as evidenced by the state-mandated test scores of their students. The teachers' perceptions reflected in the PIMRS scores and the principals' perspectives as expressed in the interviews indicate that principals employed most of the effective leadership practices measured in the PIMRS almost always to frequently. Further investigation and consideration of these leadership practices is warranted, especially considering the student achievement levels of the theme schools and the possibility that leadership is one of many factors that may have contributed to the schools' academic success.

This study could provide background information for other researchers to design studies that could look at potential solutions for increasing student achievement for African American students. The theme school initiative, leadership behaviors, and/or classroom teaching are all factors that could be further investigated to determine effects on student achievement. This study provides some basis to continue to explore the connection between effective leadership practices and African American student

achievement. The study results, particularly the negative correlation, suggests that many other factors may influence student achievement and that more exploration into classroom teaching, parental involvement, school choice, and the combined effects of several mediating factors may produce worthwhile results.

The role of school choice is one that cannot be overlooked in this study. Perhaps some of the student achievement levels could be contributed to the fact that all of the students and their parents have selected the theme schools as their choice for public education. There is no doubt that school choice plays a role in the academic success of the theme schools, however according to Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, and Smith (1979) the school has more influence on the outcome of the student than the student determines the success of the school.

Recommendations

1. This study could be implemented in elementary schools who are seeking school improvement to enhance student achievement by improving the leadership practices of the principal and leadership team. The teachers' perceptions and the principals' perspectives relative to the high student achievement are noteworthy and could provide excellent information for school improvement and enhancement.

2. Further research is recommended to compare and contrast demographically similar schools having a wider range of student achievement levels. A larger, more diversified sample could be used. One problem with this school sample was the tight cluster of student achievement levels provided little variety in student achievement. Also the schools involved in the traditional theme school initiative

were also geographically located in the southern region of one county.

3. More research is needed on the success of the traditional theme school initiative. There is a predominately Hispanic theme school and a theme school that serves predominantly African American middle school students. The results of all of the theme schools should be examined in terms of not only leadership, but also classroom engagement, parental involvement, and school choice. A different survey instrument could result in very different findings. A more in-depth qualitative study could reveal much more detail concerning the factors of the traditional theme school initiative that explains the academic success of the students.

4. Additionally leadership practices and behaviors need further attention in a variety of schools including magnet schools, charter schools, career academy schools, private schools, and other public schools. It should be determined if a core set of leadership practices are common to student success in different types of schools.

Dissemination

1. The traditional theme schools are located in a large school district that approves researchers to conduct studies in their schools with the agreement that the researcher shares the results of the study with the district. The researcher will provide an electronic copy of the completed dissertation and the school district will review the findings. The designated department of the school district recommends distribution to specified individuals based on current district initiatives and district research interests.

2. The researcher plans to write an article and submit it for publication using

selected results and findings from the study. The researcher also plans to seek

opportunities to present selected findings in local, state, or national meetings or

professional conferences.

3. The principals of the traditional theme schools have asked for a report detailing

the results. They have expressed interest in using effective leadership practices to

sustain and even improve their students' success particularly in mathematics.

4. This dissertation may also be used as information for a district study on magnet,

theme, and school choice in the district. Every two to three years, the school

district updates past studies detailing the status and impact of the school choice

programs (including magnets and themes) relative to student achievement.

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APPENDIX A

THE TEACHERS' SURVEY INSTRUMENT

PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

RATING SCALE

TEACHER FORM

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Teacher Form 2.0

**THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT
RATING SCALE**

PART I: Please provide the following information about yourself:

(A)   School Name: _____

(B)   Years, at the end of this school year, that you have worked with the current principal:

     ___ 1   ___ 5-9   ___ more than 15

     ___ 2-4   ___ 10-15

(C)   Years experience as a teacher at the end of this school year:

     ___ 1   ___ 5-9   ___ more than 15

     ___ 2-4   ___ 10-15

PART II: This questionnaire is designed to provide a profile of principal leadership. It consists of 50 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices and behaviors. You are asked to consider each question in terms of your observations of the principal's leadership over the past school year.

Read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that best fits the specific job behavior or practice of this principal during the past school year. For the response to each statement:

  5 represents *Almost Always*
  4 represents *Frequently*
  3 represents *Sometimes*
  2 represents *Seldom*
  1 represents *Almost Never*

In some cases, these responses may seem awkward; use your judgment in selecting the most appropriate response to such questions. Please circle only one number per question. Try to answer every question. Thank you.

To what extent does your principal . . . ?

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS

I. FRAME THE SCHOOL GOALS

1. Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
2. Frame the school's goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them	1	2	3	4	5
3. Use needs assessment or other formal and informal methods to secure staff input on goal development	1	2	3	4	5
4. Use data on student performance when developing the school's academic goals	1	2	3	4	5
5. Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers in the school	1	2	3	4	5

II. COMMUNICATE THE SCHOOL GOALS

6. Communicate the school's mission effectively to members of the school community	1	2	3	4	5
7. Discuss the school's academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings	1	2	3	4	5
8. Refer to the school's academic goals when making curricular decisions with teachers	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ensure that the school's academic goals are reflected in highly visible displays in the school (e.g., posters or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Refer to the school's goals or mission in forums with students (e.g., in assemblies or discussions)	1	2	3	4	5

III. SUPERVISE & EVALUATE INSTRUCTION

11. Ensure that the classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the goals and direction of the school	1	2	3	4	5
12. Review student work products when evaluating classroom instruction	1	2	3	4	5

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
13. Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled, last at least 5 minutes, and may or may not involve written feedback or a formal conference)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Point out specific strengths in teacher's instructional practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in conferences or written evaluations)	1	2	3	4	5
15. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in conferences or written evaluations)	1	2	3	4	5

IV. COORDINATE THE CURRICULUM

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
16. Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels (e.g., the principal, vice principal, or teacher-leaders)	1	2	3	4	5
17. Draw upon the results of school-wide testing when making curricular decisions	1	2	3	4	5
18. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school's curricular objectives	1	2	3	4	5
19. Assess the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the school's achievement tests	1	2	3	4	5
20. Participate actively in the review of curricular materials	1	2	3	4	5

V. MONITOR STUDENT PROGRESS

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
21. Meet individually with teachers to discuss student progress	1	2	3	4	5
22. Discuss academic performance results with the faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	5
23. Use tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Form 2.0

3

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
24. Inform teachers of the school's performance results in written form (e.g., in a memo or newsletter)	1	2	3	4	5
25. Inform students of school's academic progress	1	2	3	4	5

VI. PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

26. Limit interruptions of instructional time by public address announcements	1	2	3	4	5
27. Ensure that students are not called to the office during instructional time	1	2	3	4	5
28. Ensure that tardy and truant students suffer specific consequences for missing instructional time	1	2	3	4	5
29. Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	1	2	3	4	5
30. Limit the intrusion of extra- and co-curricular activities on instructional time	1	2	3	4	5

VII. MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY

31. Take time to talk informally with students and teachers during recess and breaks	1	2	3	4	5
32. Visit classrooms to discuss school issues with teachers and students	1	2	3	4	5
33. Attend/participate in extra- and co-curricular activities	1	2	3	4	5
34. Cover classes for teachers until a late or substitute teacher arrives	1	2	3	4	5
35. Tutor students or provide direct instruction to classes	1	2	3	4	5

VIII. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS

36. Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters, and/or memos	1	2	3	4	5
37. Compliment teachers privately for their efforts or performance	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Form 2.0

4

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
38. Acknowledge teachers' exceptional performance by writing memos for their personnel files	1	2	3	4	5
39. Reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities for professional recognition	1	2	3	4	5
40. Create professional growth opportunities for teachers as a reward for special contributions to the school	1	2	3	4	5

IX. PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

41. Ensure that inservice activities attended by staff are consistent with the school's goals	1	2	3	4	5
42. Actively support the use in the classroom of skills acquired during inservice training	1	2	3	4	5
43. Obtain the participation of the whole staff in important inservice activities	1	2	3	4	5
44. Lead or attend teacher inservice activities concerned with instruction	1	2	3	4	5
45. Set aside time at faculty meetings for teachers to share ideas or information from inservice activities	1	2	3	4	5

X. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING

46. Recognize students who do superior work with formal rewards such as an honor roll or mention in the principal's newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
47. Use assemblies to honor students for academic accomplishments or for behavior or citizenship	1	2	3	4	5
48. Recognize superior student achievement or improvement by seeing in the office the students with their work	1	2	3	4	5
49. Contact parents to communicate improved or exemplary student performance or contributions	1	2	3	4	5
50. Support teachers actively in their recognition and/or reward of student contributions to and accomplishments in class	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Form 2.0   5

APPPENDIX B

THE PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do the mission and goals of the school affect the academic success of your African American students?

2. How do you communicate the mission and goals to the stakeholders? How does your communication affect the academic success of your African American students?

3. How does your role in supervising and evaluating instruction foster the culture of African American academic achievement at this school?

4. What factors of your leadership affect the high degree of African American student proficiency on the Georgia Performance Standards-based curriculum?

5. How do you monitor student progress and does this contribute to African American student achievement?

6. How do you protect instructional time? What effect does this have on African American student achievement?

7. What are some strategies that you use to maintain visibility with the students, staff, and community? How do these strategies affect African American student achievement?

8. Do you provide incentives for teachers? If so, how does the incentive program support African American student achievement?

9. What is your role in professional development? How does this effect African American student achievement?

10. Do you provide incentives for students' learning? If so, how does the incentive program foster African American student achievement?

11. Are there other aspects of direction setting, instructional leadership, or developing the school climate that your would care to share with me that foster the culture of high African American student achievement at your school?

APPPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO USE THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

September 22, 2011

Alexis Smith

Dear Alexis:

As copyright holder and publisher, you have my permission as publisher to use the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (*PIMRS*) in your research study. In using the scale, you may make unlimited copies of any of the three forms of the PIMRS.

Please note the following conditions of use:

1. This authorization extends only to the use of the PIMRS for research purposes, not for general school district use of the instrument for evaluation or staff development purposes;

2. *The user must include a reliability analysis in the study if suitable quantitative data has been collected;*

3. The user agrees to send a soft copy of the *completed study* to the publisher upon completion of the research.

4. The user agrees to send a soft copy of the *data set* and coding instructions to the publisher upon completion of the research in order to enable further instrument development.

Please be advised that a separate *permission to publish* letter will be sent after the publisher receives a soft copy of the completed study and I have confirmed that you included a reliability analysis.

Sincerely,

Professor Philip Hallinger
7250 Golf Pointe Way
Sarasota FL, 34243
Hallinger@gmail.com

APPPENDIX D

INSTTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
Institutional Review Board (IRB)		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021 P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To:	Alexis Smith Dr. Paul Brinson Jr.
CC:	Charles E. Patterson Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College
From:	Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)
Initial Approval Date:	12/05/11
Expiration Date:	09/30/12
Subject:	Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **HI2146** and titled **"Leadership That Fosters a Culture of High Academic Achievement of African American Students,"** 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. You are authorized to enroll up to a maximum of __306__ subjects.

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.

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. Total project approval on this application may not exceed 36 months. If additional time is required, a new application may be submitted for continuing work. 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,

Eleanor Haynes

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer