

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND READING ACHIEVEMENT
AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

by

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A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

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DEDICATION

This case study is dedicated to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. I now understand Ch. 8. Thank you for your guidance and wisdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely acknowledge that, “there is no progress without struggle” (Douglass, 1857). It is also acknowledged that a mind apart from the struggle for humanity is a mind wasted.

Effective Leadership Practices and Reading Achievement at the Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

Data have changed the manner by which schools are judged, and ultimately how the leaders of schools are judged. With a 20-year stagnation in the nation's reading achievement scores and the push for college and career readiness, educational leaders must be equipped with the research-based practices that have been proven to address the need for improved reading achievement at the secondary levels. Limited research has been conducted to identify the leadership practices of effective secondary leaders who have increased students' reading achievement. This case study analysis examined three distinct cases in which reading achievement was the focus. The purposeful mix of grade level, locale and theoretical frameworks was intended to shed light on the issue of secondary reading achievement stagnation and begin the discussion of what leadership practices can be used to build a foundation for leaders to build on. Ultimately, the goal was to identify practices that led to an increased reading achievement at the secondary levels. However, the findings from these three case studies suggested that a systematic and progressive approach would be more effective than the arbitrary use of various reading achievement improvement practices.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) – Texas state assessment designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned and is able to apply the defined knowledge and skills at each tested level.

LPI (Leadership Practices Inventory) – Leadership assessment questionnaire containing 30 behavioral statements that allows the leader and/or observer to rate the frequency with which they believe the engage in each of the 30 behaviors.

AEIS (Academic Excellence Indicator System) – A system that pulls together a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and district in Texas every year.

PIMRS (Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale) - The PIMRS assesses three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: Defining the School’s Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

PACT (Pre-Admissions Content Test) – Assessment used to obtain admission into an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) in Texas.

ESLR (Expected School-wide Learning Results) - A set of expectations that articulate what each student should know, understand and be able to do.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Department of Education released a “College and Career-Ready Standards and Assessment” publication, which outlines a national commitment, spearheaded by President Obama, to ensure all students graduate college and/or are career ready (United States Department of Education, 2010). In the report, President Obama stated, “we must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career” (United States Department of Education, 2010, p. 3). There is not much debate that the future of our nation rests on our ability to prepare a viable future workforce. This reality has prompted much debate about the lack of progress on the part of schools across the nation to produce graduates that are readied with the skills necessary to fortify the nation’s workforce. Business leaders have pushed for educational reforms and greater educational productivity as a result of having to absorb the exorbitant costs of training high school graduates in basic skills (Leech & Fulton, 2008).

However, even with a presidential push, the national educational achievement landscape remains stagnant, at best, especially in regard to reading proficiency. There has been a 5% decline in reading proficiency for 12th grade students over the past 23 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Currently, only 37% of 12th grade students read at a level that is proficient or above, which leaves 63% reading at a level that is basic or below.

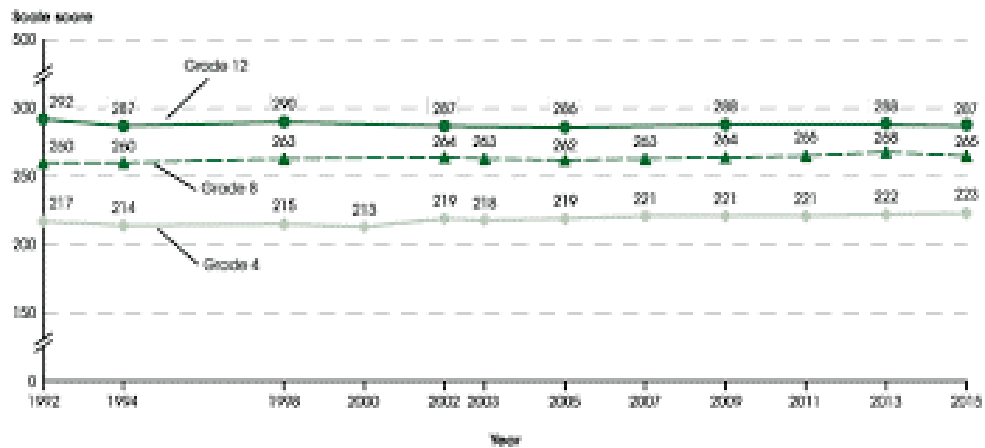


Table 1: National reading scores from 1992 – 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)

Hall & Kennedy indicated in their 2006 research that secondary level school students would not be equipped with the needed reading proficiency by 2013-2014. Hall and Kennedy's (2006) research is eerily prophetic and accurate, based on the data from *The Condition of Education* report released by the Department of Education. These statistics reflect a time period in which a call for more school improvement was prominent. So what has happened?

Data have changed the manner by which schools are judged, and ultimately how the leaders of schools are judged. With more focus on data-driven instruction and high-stakes testing, today's principals/leaders must be more sophisticated with their leadership practices and deal with the ever-changing demands and standards placed on their schools (Balyer, 2012). Aside from being astute instructional leaders, principals must also demonstrate the practices of effective leadership (Mackey, Pitcher & Decman, 2006). In order to achieve the lofty goal of being both instructional leaders and demonstrating effective leadership practices, many leaders have adopted transformational leadership as their leadership model (Nash, 2010). Bass (1990) states that "transformational leaders inspire, energize, and intellectually stimulate their employees" (p. 21). In addition, Balyer (2012) noted that transformational leadership impacts teachers' commitment to building vision and high-stakes performance. Why then have educational leaders been unable

to utilize this leadership style to make gains in the critical areas of student reading and math achievement? Simply put, there have not been enough studies that address the correlation between transformational leadership style and student achievement on standardized tests (Nash, 2010). Ironically, “Secondary schools have one of the largest impacts on student achievement because it is aligned with each student’s exodus into society” (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 2). It becomes clearer that additional research on leadership practices’ impact on student achievement on standardized tests needs to be conducted.

1.2. Background of the Problem

According to Chang, Lan, Chang & Sung (2010), “the ability to read profoundly influences academic achievement” (p. 64). Also, reading achievement is essential to the ability of high school students to obtain additional skills (Hawkins, Hale, Shelley & Ling, 2010). However, with nearly half of all graduating seniors, as of 2013, exiting with less than grade level reading proficiency, currently education is falling short of this national standard (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This is evidenced by data on remedial reading course enrollment (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011), and concerns from workforce employers (McNamara, 2009). According to the ACT, only 44% of tested graduating high school seniors were deemed college ready in the area of reading (ACT, 2010). Also, according to 23 years of data collected by the Scholastic Aptitude Test data, there has been a 5% decrease in critical reading scores from 1984 to 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject

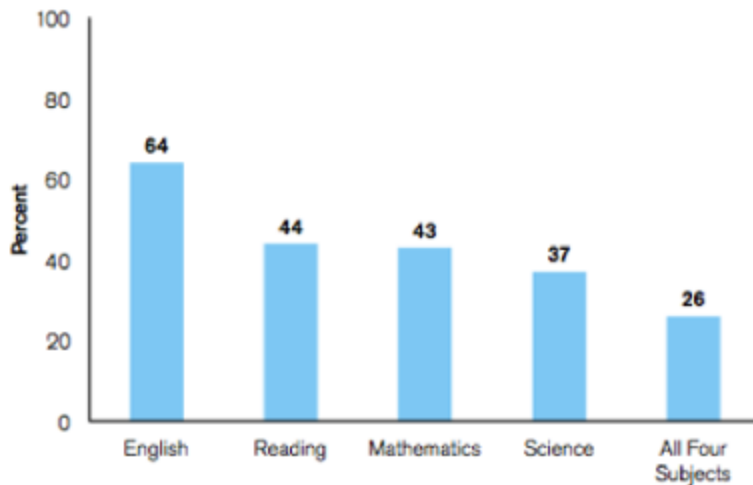


Table 2: Percent of 2014 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by subject

IES NCES

National Center for Education Statistics

MENU

FAST FACTS

SAT scores

Question:

What are the average scores for students taking the SAT?

Response:

The SAT (formerly known as the Scholastic Assessment Test and the Scholastic Aptitude Test) is not designed as an indicator of student achievement, but rather as an aid for predicting how well students will do in college. Possible scores on each section of the SAT range from 200 to 800. Between 1996–99 and 2004–05, the mathematics SAT average score increased by 9 points, but it decreased by 9 points between 2004–05 (520) and 2014–15 (511). The critical reading average score decreased by 13 points between 2004–05 (508) and 2014–15 (495). Between 2005–06 (the year in which the SAT writing section was introduced) and 2014–15, the writing average score decreased by 13 points (from 497 to 484).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015* (NCES 2016–014), Chapter 2.

SAT mean scores of college-bound seniors, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1986–87 through 2014–15																			
Race/ethnicity	1986–87	1990–91	1996–97	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	
SAT-Critical reading																			
All students	507	499	505	505	506	504	507	508	508	503	502	502	501	501	497	496	496	497	495
White	524	518	526	528	529	527	529	528	532	527	527	528	528	528	527	527	527	529	529
Black	428	427	434	434	433	430	431	430	433	434	433	430	429	429	428	428	431	431	431

Table 3: SAT reading scores from 1986 – 2015

As Ediger (2001) indicated, principals are being measured by students’ standardized test performance. With students demonstrating a continuum of under-preparedness, principals suffer dismissal (School Leaders Network, 2014). According to the School Leaders Network’s “Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover Report”, 50% of new principals never make it to their third year. Is it that they are under-qualified, or under-prepared? Gaining a clear understanding of what leadership practices are needed to foster growth in the area of reading achievement is

imperative (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Principals must understand not only key leadership practices, but also key reading strategies that will assist in moving student reading achievement forward (Ediger, 2001).

Lan, Lo & Hsu (2014) indicated that educators universally agree that “the ultimate goal of reading is to comprehend text” (p. 186). High school teachers tend not to focus on comprehension acquisition, believing the skill should not be their responsibility (Hawkins, Hale, Shelley & Ling, 2011). A study conducted by Swanson & Hoskyn (2001) confirms this notion. Swanson & Hoskyn stated, “difficulties with reading fluency and comprehension are compounded at the high school level by the increasing amount of reading material that students are expected to master across content areas” (p. 109). Preparing normal teaching materials is time consuming enough, let alone becoming familiar with, and implementing, reading strategies (Van Keer, 2004; Chang, Lan, Chang & Sung, 2010).

With the aforementioned issues plaguing secondary reading achievement, the trending focus on data-driven accountability and the role of the principal are now major factors for student success (Marsh, 1997). Principals no longer have the luxury of delineating the task of reading programs within their schools, and hoping that success is achieved (Crum, 2008). Crum also noted that “high schools rarely address literacy and literacy instruction directly. The studies that address the link between principal characteristics and standardized test scores are limited at best, and within this limited study pool, attention to the secondary level is almost non-existent” (Crum, 2008, p. 19). School administrators, especially at the secondary levels, are directly tied to test results (Ediger, 2001); however, there is limited research as to what practices a principal can exhibit in order to increase students’ reading achievement. As a result, the students exit without the needed skills to be successful in college or the career field. Reading achievement at the

secondary level is imperative because it is the final opportunity for students to gain basic skills needed for success either in the workplace or college (Jacobs & Kristonis, 2006). The impact of students graduating without reading skills is twofold. First, if students enroll in college without the basic reading skills, they are more likely to be enrolled in non-credit bearing courses, which they still must pay for, ultimately delaying their entry into the workforce and inflating the cost of their overall education (Knepler, Klasik & Sunderman, 2014). Second, without the basic reading skills graduates attempting to enter the workplace are at a considerable disadvantage (Loten, 2006). This disadvantage could require business to invest in costly trainings or outsource jobs, and many businesses have opted for the latter (Leech & Fulton, 2008). This trend will only further contribute to the nation's already declining employment rates (Bessen, 2014, p. 2). By identifying principal practices that increase overall academic student achievement, principals could possibly increase reading achievement.

1.3. Need for the Study

Leadership practices or behaviors have been heavily researched within education with widely varying results. Tatlah, Iqbal, Amin & Quraishi (2014) conducted an Ex-Post-Facto study that examined the impact of principal behaviors on tenth grade students' achievement in Punjab, Pakistan. The study utilized the Leadership Practices Instrument Self-assessment (LPI-S), the Leadership Practices Instrument Observer assessment (LPI-O), and secondary standardized student test data. Specific leadership behaviors were not identified; however, the results indicated that there was a stark contrast between the leader's perception of their impact on student achievement and teachers' observed leader impact. The results indicated that when described by both the principals and the teachers "there was no significant effect of leadership behaviors of principals on students' academic achievement" (p. 10). However, when described by the

principals themselves, leadership behaviors showed a statistical significance on students' academic achievement. A study such as this provides insight into some of the pre-existing discrepancies that exist between teacher and leadership.

A study examining leadership practices as a predictor for graduation test results conducted in Georgian high schools also produced ambiguous results (Siegrist, Weeks, Pate & Monetti, 2009). While the LPI-S showed that modeling the way was the most frequently reported practice by principals, it was still determined that principals' impact on academic achievement "varies from study to study and can depend on many factors" (p. 177). In addition, the principal behaviors measured by the LPI did not show any meaningful significance when it came to student achievement.

Mackey, Pitcher & Decman (2006) used the qualitative approach to determine the influence that four urban elementary school principals had on their varying reading programs. Through triangulation and effective member checking, the researchers determined that three major themes allowed elementary principals to influence the reading programs and student scores: "(1) the principal's vision of the reading program, (2) the educational background the principal brings with her/him; and (3) how the principal defines and applies her/his role as an instructional leader within the school" (p. 47). These findings are in keeping with the transformational leadership style (Northouse, 2013). While studies have examined reading achievement at lower levels, a gap exists when it comes to the secondary levels of education (Nash, 2010; Mackey, Pitcher & Decman, 2006). By focusing on the southern Maryland area, and more specifically tenth grade students, this research will serve as additional insight into the topic of leadership practices and secondary reading achievement.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate principal leadership practices that increase reading achievement at the secondary level. The researcher used secondary data from previously conducted case studies in order to identify trends that helped to identify leadership practices that increase reading achievement at the secondary level.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Research has asserted, and confirmed, that educational leaders are critical to schools, staff and students (Al-Omari, 2008; Law, Walker & Dimmock, 2003). Chapman and Harris (2004) identified the lack of empirical studies on principals as instructional leaders. As a result, this study's significance lies in the fact that educational leaders at the secondary level will be able to see clearly which leadership practices impact the overall academic achievement of students. This research supports the nation's pursuit of college and career readiness for all students, especially in regard to reading proficiency.

1.6. Relevance to Educational Leadership

Educational leaders must dramatically step up efforts to improve secondary schools, as evidenced by the 20-year stagnation of reading achievement at the secondary level (Hall & Kennedy, 2006). Standards-based accountability is calling for school leaders to become instructional leaders and have a hand in the instructional programs of their buildings (Green, 2006). My research focus provides insight as to what leadership traits they should be demonstrating in order to increase reading achievement in their school building. Also, the findings can help to expedite an increase in student reading achievement and thus, contribute heavily to job security. One of the key elements determining whether or not a school fosters student learning is leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, 2004). Leaders of

buildings need to “understand the components of reading success and monitor achievement” (Crum, 2008, p. 2). Without knowing which practices can support reading achievement at the secondary levels, educational leaders are left to resort to trial and error, and unfortunately, this usually results in their demise (School Leaders Network, 2014).

1.7. Theoretical/Leadership Framework

Transformational leadership encompasses fostering tighter bonds between leaders and followers (Bass, 1990). In addition to this tighter bond, leaders help followers see how transforming themselves for the greater good of the vision is important (Avolio, 1999). Many studies have been conducted that demonstrate a correlation between transformational leadership and student achievement. Educational leaders who exhibit the key traits of transformational leadership are positively related to better employee performance (Muenjohn & Anderson, 2007). Ross & Gray (2006) concluded that “principals who adopt a transformational leadership style are likely to have a positive impact on teacher beliefs about their collective capacity and on teacher commitment to organizational values” (p. 812). The impact on the teachers is believed to have a modest impact on improved student achievement. Whether the impact is direct or indirect, the impact of transformational leadership has been solidified through multiple research efforts.

1.8. Limitations

The limitations of this research are as follows:

- Accuracy of secondary achievement scores reported in each study.
- Small sample size analyzed in each case study.
- Confounding factors.
- Honesty of the Participants.
- Only a snapshot.

1.9. Delimitations

The delimitations of this research are as follows:

- The locale of the study was specifically chosen.
- The grade level was an intended choice.

1.10. Definition of Terms

TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) – Texas state assessment designed to measure the extent to which a student has learned and is able to apply the defined knowledge and skills at each tested level.

LPI (Leadership Practices Inventory) – Leadership assessment questionnaire containing 30 behavioral statements that allows the leader and/or observer to rate the frequency with which they believe they engage in each of the 30 behaviors.

AEIS (Academic Excellence Indicator System) – A system that pulls together a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and district in Texas every year.

PIMRS (Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale) - The PIMRS assesses three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

PACT (Pre-Admissions Content Test) – Assessment used to obtain admission into an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) in Texas.

ESLR (Expected School-wide Learning Results) - A set of expectations that articulate what each student should know, understand and be able to do.

1.11. Summary

The current state of reading achievement in the United States is dismal, or stagnant at best. The research indicates that there has been limited inquiry into the leadership practices that impact student achievement in reading. While some data indicate that leadership practices have an indirect impact on student achievement, it has also been stated that leadership is second only to teacher instruction as a means of impacting student achievement. Additional inquiries need to be made into which leadership practices impact student reading achievement. Whether the impacts are direct or indirect, more information needs to be identified, as any positive impacts that leaders can have to improve student reading achievement are needed. This case study examines leadership behaviors and student reading achievement, which will add to the overall body of research on this topic.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This case study analysis examined leadership practices that impact student reading achievement. The review of literature in regard to educational leadership and student achievement has revealed that transformational leadership and instructional leadership have significant impacts. In addition, the emergence of the shared leadership model has suggested it is important. The literature actually reveals that the presence of both transactional and instructional leadership yield the best results in the educational setting. Thus, the literature review that follows is an examination of leadership approaches that have been deemed most effective in increasing student achievement, and leadership practices that have led to improved student reading achievement.

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Educational leaders who exhibit the key traits of transformational leadership are positively related to better employee performance (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2007). Burns defined transformational leadership as “a process where leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (Northouse, 2013, p.187). According to Burns, “the transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organizations” (Northouse, 2013, p.189). Burns argued that, “through training, managers can learn the techniques and obtain the qualities they need to become transformational leaders” (Bass, 1990, p. 19). This concept was fleshed out even further when Bass (1985) said that transformational leaders focus on motivating, intellectual stimulation and individual considerations. Bass identified specific behaviors that transformational leaders displayed in order to transform organizations: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration (Northouse, 2004). Kouzes and Posner furthered the concept of

transformational leadership practices in their text “The Leadership Challenge”. Kouzes and Posner stated that, “transformational leadership is the kind of leadership that gets people to infuse their energy into strategies” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 122). These researchers identified five practices of exemplary leaders which are: (1) Model the Way, (2) Inspire a Shared Vision, (3) Challenge the Process, (4) Enable Others to Act, and (5) Encourage the Heart (Kouze & Posner, 2012, p. 15). Kouzes & Posner (1988) provide a brief overview of each of these practices, and the actions that leaders take for each practice.

1. Challenging the Process
 - a. Search for Opportunities
 - b. Experiment and take risks
2. Inspiring a Shared Vision
 - a. Envision the future
 - b. Enlist the support of others
3. Enabling Other to Act
 - a. Foster collaboration
 - b. Strengthen others
4. Modeling the Way
 - a. Set the example
 - b. Plan small wins
5. Encouraging the Heart
 - a. Recognizing contributions
 - b. Celebrate accomplishments (p. 485).

These practices are directly aligned with Bass' (1985) initial concept of transformational leadership. Pugh, Fillingim, Blackbourne, Bunch & Thomas (2011) surmised the relationship between the five leadership practices (transformational leadership) and education by stating, "Effective leadership for 21st Century schools depends, to a great extent, on the principal's ability to inspire, enable, and motivate faculty, while concurrently modeling professional behaviors and challenging the status quo" (p. 1). Many studies have been conducted that demonstrate a correlation between transformational leadership and student achievement. Educational leaders who exhibit the key traits of transformational leadership are positively related to better employee performance (Muenjohn & Anderson, 2007).

In a study by Natalia Campbell, Ed.D, of the Wadsworth Magnet School for High Achievers, the findings revealed that "transformational leadership of the school administration team paved the way for success" (Campbell, 2013, p. 203). Balyer (2012) utilized the qualitative study approach to examine the major characteristics of transformational leadership among principals and their impact on schools. This study revealed that principals who demonstrated idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, all of which are the major components of transformational leadership, had increased school performance and teacher satisfaction. Nash's study explored the use of transformational leadership practices among students who are generally considered at-risk. The study examined principals' leadership styles among "poor, black, brown and linguistically diverse students" (Nash, 2010, p. 56). Nash concluded that, "transformational leadership existed among principals in the sample, [and] it was significantly correlated with students' achievement in certain areas" (p. 57).

Contrastingly, some research has supported the idea that leadership has an indirect effect on student achievement. Ross & Gray (2006) concluded that “principals who adopt a transformational leadership style are likely to have a positive impact on teacher beliefs about their collective capacity and on teacher commitment to organizational values” (p. 812). The impact on the teachers is believed to have a modest impact on improved student achievement. Whether the impact is direct or indirect, the impact of transformational leadership has been solidified through multiple research efforts. However, in recent years, there has been a movement toward another type of leadership, which appears to be more befitting to the educational environment.

2.2. Instructional Leadership

Most recently, principals have been viewed as needing to be focused on instruction and not management. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson (2004) asserted in their research that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning” (p. 5). Instructional leadership theory emerged from studies in the 1970s and early 1980s that examined poor urban schools that were successful despite the environment (Edmonds, 1979). This emergence of instructional leadership appeared to be organic. During the 70s and 80s, classroom instructors pursuing administrative positions often worked their way up the ladder from the classroom to department chair, to vice principal and, ultimately, to the principalship. This process provided the potential principal with valuable instructional experiences that they could later use in their position of leadership. Further research helped to identify school characteristics that typified the success of instructional leaders, which include a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives and high teacher expectations for students (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee, 1982). This research further asserts that these school

characteristics are fostered by principals that “provide coherence to their schools’ instructional programs, conceptualize instructional goals, set high academic standards, stay informed of policies and teachers’ problems, make frequent classroom visits, create incentives for learning, and maintain student discipline” (p. 35).

The initial concept of instructional leadership was deemed to be the sole role of the principal, thus early research omitted the inclusion of staff contributions to instructional goal setting, oversight of the teaching programs, and the development of a positive academic and learning culture (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008). Robinson, Llyod and Rowe found that instructional leadership had a three to four times greater impact on student achievement than transformational leadership. While data have supported the impact of instructional leadership, there are contrasting viewpoints.

Instructional leadership provides a rather limited impact in regard to responding to outside demands of policy, accountability, performativity, and change (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016) In keeping with this statement, Marks and Printy (2003) stated, “Responding to these demands with an outmoded conception of instructional leadership was senseless, but engaging teachers in a collaborative dialogue about these issues and their implications for teaching and learning was essential” (p. 374).

As a result of this type of perspective in regard to instructional leadership, another type of leadership, shared leadership, emerged to the forefront of educational reform.

2.3. Shared Leadership

The pool of research on shared leadership is limited, at best (Kocolowski, 2010). Although shared leadership dates back to ancient times and was so effective that it lasted for centuries, it is commonly viewed as counterintuitive (Sally, 2002; O’Toole, Galbraith & Lawler,

2002). Conger and Pearce (2003) defined shared leadership as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both” (p. 286). Shared leadership is “an overall team environment that consists of three dimensions: shared purpose, social support, and voice” (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007, p. 1218). The pool of research literature on shared leadership uses the terms shared leadership, collective leadership and distributed leadership interchangeably (Koccolowski, 2010).

The research on shared leadership in the educational field has yielded contrasting viewpoints. Shared leadership was examined by Carte, Chidambaram, and Becker in 2006 and it was found that it had a positive association with monitoring group work, but did not increase performance. In a study of Tasmanian schools, Boardman (2001) discovered that the leaders were more excited about shared leadership than the teachers. The research on shared leadership suggests that certain organizational traits be present for the best results. Organizations attempting to implement shared leadership must ensure that principals foster differences and various opinions, provide clear communication, guarantee teachers’ voices are heard, do not ignore emotions, and clearly define members’ roles (Kezar, 1998; Beatty, 2007; Rice, 2006; Hall, 2001). The research asserts that leaders must also implement certain norms in regard to group-based teams in order to successfully implement shared leadership (Koccolowski, 2010, p. 27). Koccolowski stated that leaders needed to foster:

1. The facilitation of team members learning how to relate to and communicate with each other on an interpersonal basis.
2. The facilitation of increased levels of trust among group members.
3. The facilitation of increased group solidarity.

4. The reduction of misunderstanding among group members.
5. The facilitation skills necessary for preventing and resolving intra-group conflict (p. 27).

2.4. Leadership Practices and Achievement

While Kouzes and Posner clearly identified the practices of exemplary leaders in the text “The Leadership Challenge” (5th Edition), how these practices apply to the educational field is still being determined. The five practices of exemplary leaders are (1) model the way, (2) inspire a shared vision, (3) challenge the process, (4) enable others to act, and (5) encourage the heart (Kouze & Posner, 2012). Pugh, Fillingim, Blackbourn, Bunch & Thomas (2011) surmised the relationship between the five leadership practices and education by stating “Effective leadership for 21st Century schools depends, to a great extent, on the principal's ability to inspire, enable, and motivate faculty, while concurrently modeling professional behaviors and challenging the status quo” (p. 4). While identifying relevant leadership practices is important, it also must be noted that no one leadership approach works in every school situation, and leaders must find approaches that work best for their particular situation (Dwyer, Lee, Rowan & Bossert, 1983). Hallinger, Bickman & Davis (1996) conducted a study on leadership and reading achievement, and they noted that while many scholars believe that school leaders can impact student achievement through their interactions with staff and students, few studies actually examined how this could be accomplished. Thus, a gap exists in the area of empirical studies on leadership practices and student achievement.

More recently, studies have focused on leadership practices and school reform (Ylimaki, 2007). Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane (2013) used a qualitative-interpretive paradigm research model to examine instructional leadership practices in challenging schools in South Africa. This

study identified modeling the way, enabling others to act, encouraging the heart and inspiring a shared vision as the multiple truths that principals credited for their success (Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013). Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane (2013) provided good insight into effective instructional leadership practices. While the context of South Africa differs from the eastern United States, “an increasing number of scholars acknowledge and analyze the international similarities and differences of educational reform and educational leadership” (Crow, 2007). The trend has been to focus on reform strategies as a whole, not necessarily instructional leadership practices, in those schools that are catastrophically underperforming (Ylimaki, 2007). The rationale for the specific focus on these chronically underperforming schools is due to the fact that continual failure to meet adequate progress results in corrective actions such as charter school conversion, firings, and staff restructuring. While these studies provide some insight into the leadership practices of these effective leaders, most are focused at the elementary levels.

A study of note was a qualitative study of instructional leadership practices in a challenging school context in South Africa (p. 141). This study found that three of the five leadership practices were prevalent in the schools demonstrating success in challenging context: (1) modeling the way, (2) enabling others to act, and (3) inspiring a shared vision (p.141). While the study does provide insight as to what practices helped the principals deal with challenging school context, there was no measurement of specific student achievement (Naiker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013). More information is needed about the specific practices that are leading to students’ reading achievement.

2.5. Leadership Practices and Reading Achievement

Schmoker (2006) noted that even with all the high-stakes testing and pressure, there was a lack of literature that focused on “the impact of the building leader and the need for principals

to effectively guide the secondary reading program” (p. 43). Ironically, “Secondary schools have one of the largest impacts on student achievement because it is aligned with each student’s exodus into society” (Jacobs & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 2). It becomes clearer that additional research on leadership practices’ impact on student reading achievement on standardized tests needs to be conducted.

The research focus, when it comes to reading achievement, has largely overlooked the impact of leadership behaviors at the secondary level. Studies have focused on general achievement as measured by cross-curricular standardized tests, but few have focused directly on the leadership behaviors that impact reading achievement at the secondary level. Murphy (2004) examined over 500 articles, books and chapters relating to reading and literacy over the past 20 years in an attempt to “draft leadership blueprints for strengthening literacy in our nation’s schools” (p. 73). This research was viewed through the lens of instructional leadership, as it was determined that a focus on the school reading program and the classroom practices were the major factors when it came to reading achievement levels. Instructional leadership provided the foundation for addressing these two components. The study focused on the leadership practices of principals who had success in improving reading achievement that emerged from the literature. The findings indicated that 10 specific practices emerged among the most success principals:

- Establishing literacy as a priority.
- Developing an appropriate platform of beliefs.
- Ensuring quality instruction.
- Maximizing time.
- Constructing a quality program.

- Assessing performance and ensuring accountability.
- Creating a coherent and aligned reading system.
- Fostering staff development and promoting communities of learners.
- Forging links between home and school.
- Building capacity (p. 74).

These findings actually support the findings from the literature in regard to leadership and overall achievement. A similar study conducted by Hollenbeck and Rieckhoff (2014) examined the behaviors of principals through the lens of literacy leadership. These researchers asserted that “ultimately, a principal’s success often rests upon his skills as a change agent, including knowledge of the change process” (p. 3). This research utilized the method of in-depth interviews of two principals to get a glimpse of the impactful behaviors of principals that have had success in improving reading achievement (p. 30). The findings indicated five behaviors that emerged:

- Change Agent.
- Focus.
- Culture-Optimizer.
- Situational Awareness.
- Monitoring and Evaluating (p. 32).

The limitations of the study are glaring, but the purpose was to stimulate further inquiry into the topic of leadership practices and literacy achievement (Hollenbeck & Rieckhoff, 2014, p. 43). The literature on reading achievement has largely focused on reading comprehension, difficulties with reading comprehension, and reading strategies, all of which are mainly focused on the lower levels of K-6.

2.6. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the use of some strategies to conduct a “meaning-making process” (Zhang and Wu, 2009, p. 38). May (1998) identified reading as an intricate cognitive process, and a pertinent way of acquiring language and communicating. The process of decoding and comprehension are the two dimensions of reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Burgoyne, Whiteley & Hutchinson, 2011). Lan, Lo & Hsu (2014) indicated that educators universally agree that “the ultimate goal of reading is to comprehend text” (p. 186). With this in mind, Williams & Atkins (2009) notes that metacognition is a significant factor for text comprehension (p. 26). Harris (1990) drew the conclusion that metacognitive abilities are differentiating factors between good and poor readers (p. 36). According to Chang, Lan, Chang & Sung (2010), “the ability to read profoundly influences academic achievement” (p. 1). Also, reading comprehension is essential to the ability of high school students to obtain additional skills (Hawkins, Hale, Sheeley & Ling, 2011, p. 60).

2.7. Difficulties with Reading Comprehension

In a study that examined factors that contribute to low reading literacy achievement, Linnakyla, Malin & Taube (2004) indicated that a multitude of variables exist. Among those variables are “students’ gender, self-esteem, motivation, reading interest, parents’ education, economic and cultural resources” (p. 233), just to name a few. All of these variables would prove to be daunting tasks if attacked individually, let alone collectively, in an attempt to address reading comprehension proficiency. In addition, Linnakyla, Malin & Taube (2004) noted that teacher traits such as education and experience, in-service activities and beliefs play a large role, as well. So how then can educators begin to address the critical issue of reading comprehension deficit? A thorough diagnosis of a student’s reading difficulty needs to address speed, accuracy

and comprehension (Cecilia, Vittorini, Cofini & Orio, 2014,). Poor decoders and poor comprehenders are two separate and distinctive issues. While poor decoders, also known commonly as dyslexics, have difficulty decoding words, they tend to manage comprehension fairly well (Bishop, 2004, p. 858). Poor comprehenders decipher sentences and words effectively, yet they struggle with understanding what they read (Nation, 2005, p. 250). In addition, they do not do a good job with making inferences from what they read (Cain, Oakhill, Barnes & Bryant, 2001, p. 850). The identification of poor comprehenders is less prevalent than the identification of dyslexics, as fewer studies have been conducted on comprehenders, and the condition is not widely acknowledged by teachers (Hulme & Snowling, 2009, p. 55). Oakhill (1993) further asserts that the poor comprehenders are overlooked because of their ability to decode words rapidly and effectively, and read aloud accurately (p. 230). Thus, teachers may view the student as a fluent reader, and assume that they understand what they are reading.

2.8. Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are deliberate, planned tasks that active readers utilize (Garner, 1987, p. 45). Brantmeier (2002) defined reading strategies as “the comprehension processes that readers use in order to make sense of what they read” (p. 1). Phakiti (2003) identified two categories for reading strategies: cognitive and metacognitive (p. 27). The physical or mental manipulation of reading material is considered a cognitive strategy (Tabrizi & Vafakhah, 2014, p. 429). Strategies that are used to corral comprehension and learning are referred to as metacognitive (p. 430). Furthermore, reading strategies can also be expanded into more expansive categories such as cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, memory strategies and test-taking strategies (Zhang, 1993, p. 1).

There are a multitude of reading strategies. For example, brainstorming, mapping, questioning strategies, graphic organizers, SQ3R, highlighting, rereading, and skimming are all research-based strategies. While some of these strategies have been combined to formulate holistic approaches, others have demonstrated positive effect merits in isolation (Maeng, 2014, p. 106). More positive effects have been observed when a multiple strategy approach is incorporated (p. 107). The literature also stresses the importance of teacher efficacy in improving reading achievement.

2.9. Teachers' Efficacy

The teacher's education, in-service activities and instructional preferences have a direct correlation to reading comprehension achievement (Linnakyla, Malin & Taube, 2004, p. 239). Thus, teachers' efficacy impacts students' reading comprehension abilities. The idea of teachers having mastery experiences in regard to students' reading comprehension is important for teacher efficacy (Hoy, 2000, p.3). However, without proper training on how to identify and remedy poor comprehension, teachers do not have the opportunity for mastery experiences (p. 4). In addition, due to the assumptions that reading comprehension is a skill acquired at the lower grade levels, some secondary instructors do not get the opportunities for vicarious experiences or social persuasion either (p. 4). Both are key in the development of teacher efficacy. Hoy (2000) also notes that "experienced teachers seem resistant to change" (p. 6). The idea that secondary teachers are not witnessing effective reading comprehension interventions contributes to their lack of efficacy in their ability to address students' needs (Protheroe, 2008, p. 43). In addition, there is a continual battle within education itself as to the best means of reading instruction. The ideological battle between whole language and phonics presents a conundrum for educators, and thus students get lost in the debate (Shaughnessy, 2004, p. 162). The responsibility of teaching

reading comprehension skills and strategies is not a task many secondary teachers embrace. In addition, it is not a task that many elementary teachers have mastered. Diligent planning and organization are needed in order to increase teachers' efficacy in relation to reading comprehension instruction (Allinder, 1994, p. 92). In addition, an increased efficacy, through the identification of effective research-based strategies, in-service training and student success will increase teachers' willingness to try even more new approaches (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977, p. 189).

2.10. Summary

The literature reviewed in this section focused on leadership approaches that have been deemed most effective in increasing student achievement, and leadership practices that have led to improved student reading achievement. The literature shows that transformational leadership has consistently led to increases in student achievement, though most of the impact has been indirect. This well-established leadership style has been researched thoroughly in the field of education. More recently, instructional leadership has been embraced by the educational community as a more befitting leadership style, as it is more conducive to the elements of education. Its origins are somewhat organic versus transformational leadership which was identified outside of the field of education and later adopted. Instructional leadership too has high rates of correlation to academic achievement; nearly four times that of transformational. Shared leadership is the newest leadership trend in the educational community, though its origins date back thousands of years. Educational leaders have adopted this new leadership approach, which contrasts with the past perceptions of leaders. In the past, educational leadership was viewed as an individual position, that of the principal, and a delineation of requests, demands and information was generated in a top-down manner. However, shared leadership is structured as a

means of flattening the traditional hierarchy of educational leadership and incorporating the school staff in leadership dealings. This approach is a result of the increased demands placed on principals and the belief that teachers can serve as experts within their specific contents. Overall, there is a cornucopia of literature that speaks to leadership practices and student achievement. There is less literature on leadership practices and reading achievement on the secondary level.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The researcher identified, analyzed and critiqued three distinct case studies that addressed the area of educational leadership behaviors and student achievement. The three case studies covered the educational leadership behaviors at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Based on previous research, the examination of the various levels of education is key to determining the best practices of principals for increasing student achievement, particularly in reading. In order to identify potential case studies to examine, the researcher utilized multiple search engines to generate a pool of choices. EBSCOHOST, ERIC and Google “scholarly articles” search engines were used to generate the initial pool of case studies.

By utilizing key words such as school leadership, school leadership case study, leadership effectiveness and achievement case study, leadership and student achievement, school leadership and reading achievement, and reading achievement and leadership the researcher identified a number of possible studies. Once the initial pool was generated, the researcher then eliminated results based on the criteria needed for studies to qualify as case studies. Once this process was completed, the researcher identified a pool of 12 potential case studies. After conferring with the committee chair, the researcher selected the three most comprehensive, detailed and appropriate studies. The first case study examined was “Principals’ Distributed Leadership Behaviors and Their Impact on Student Achievement in Selected Elementary Schools in Texas” (Chen, 2007). The second case study was “Leadership Practices That Enhance Reading Achievement for African American Males” (Dawson, 2010). The third, and final, case study was “Effective Leadership Practices of Catholic High School Principals That Support Student Achievement” (Valadez, 2013).

Each study contains insight into effective leadership practices, and by exploring the various levels of education, alternate school settings, and at-risk populations, the researcher believes that certain trends will emerge, thus providing a “big picture” view of effective practices of successful educational leaders which lead to reading achievement. By identifying these best practices, the researcher hopes to add to the body of research by adding to the limited body of research on educational leadership and reading achievement. The goal is to identify the principal leadership practices that lead to increased reading achievement and highlight the measured impacts presented in the case studies that are analyzed in this chapter.

3.2. Case Study #1

Author: Chen, Y.

Title: Principals’ Distributed Leadership Behaviors and Their Impact on Student Achievement in Selected Elementary Schools in Texas

Year: 2007

3.3. Purpose:

This case study was founded on the premise that a single individual, the principal, is not the sole leader when it comes to school improvement. There are too many internal and external factors that impact schools, and it behooves all involved to examine both the teachers and administrators as leaders. The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of principals’ leadership practices by teacher leaders and the impact, if any, of these practices on student achievement. This descriptive statistical study utilized the Leadership Practices Inventory to collect data from participating teacher leaders, from Region VI in Texas, in regard to principal practices. The study also used data from the 2004-2006 Academic Excellence Indicator System report. There were six key findings from this study. The findings largely revolved around the

concept of distributed leadership, which falls in line with the data presented in this study and previously published literature. The researcher surmised the key followings by stating, “The positive impact of ‘Enabling Other to Act’, and ‘Inspiring a Shared Vision’ on student achievement implies that distributed leadership is most likely to contribute to school improvement” (Chen, 2007, p. iv).

3.4. Hypothesis and Research Question:

The concept of distributed leadership was the foundation of the research questions for this study. In order to address the idea of principals’ perceived distributed leadership behaviors and their possible effects on student achievement, the research used the following questions:

1. What are the leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders?
 - a. What are principals’ Modeling the Way behaviors indicated by teacher leaders?
 - b. What are principals’ Inspiring a Shared Vision behaviors as indicated by teacher leaders?
 - c. What are principals’ Challenging the Process behaviors as indicated by teacher leaders?
 - d. What are principals’ Enabling Others to Act behaviors as indicated by teacher leaders?
 - e. What are principals’ Encouraging the Heart behaviors as indicated by teacher leaders?
2. What are principals’ self-reported leadership practices?
 - a. What are principals’ self-reported practices in Modeling the Way?

- b. What are principals' self-reported practices in Inspiring a Shared Vision?
 - c. What are principals' self-reported practices in Challenging the Process?
 - d. What are principals' self-reported practices in Encouraging Others to Act?
 - e. What are principals' self-reported practices in Encouraging the Heart?
3. What is the difference between leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders and self?
- a. What is the difference between leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders and self in Modeling the Way?
 - b. What is the difference between leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders and self in Inspiring a Shared Vision?
 - c. What is the difference between leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders and self in Challenging the Process?
 - d. What is the difference between leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders and self in Enabling Others to Act?
 - e. What is the difference between leadership practices of principals as indicated by teacher leaders and self in Encouraging the Heart?
4. What impact do principals' leadership practices have on student achievement? (Chen, 2007, p. 5).

3.5. Methodology/Type of Study

3.6. Research Design

This case study was designed as a descriptive statistical study that utilized survey and secondary data sources. The researcher (Chen, 2007) chose to utilize the 2003 third edition Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) that was created by Kouzes and Posner (2007). The LPI is

used to rate leaders' skills and provide feedback for improvement. The LPI focuses on the Five Practices behaviors: (a) Modeling the Way, (b) Inspiring a Shared Vision, (c) Challenging the Process, (d) Enabling Others to Act, and (e) Encouraging the Heart. The LPI is a 30-item questionnaire containing six statements for each of the five practices. Lastly, the instrument uses a 10-point degree scale and generates a scale score for each of the five leadership practices. The researcher selected this particular instrument and provided the following rationale for its usage:

The researcher selected the LPI because it is a well-established instrument, can be easily understood by participants and may be completed by participants in a short amount of time. In addition, the researcher chose to use the LPI studying principals' leadership behaviors because the five dimensions of the LPI..... are closely related to the components of other leadership theories, especially distributed (Chen, 2007, p. 53).

3.7. Reliability

The reliability of the LPI has been fortified over an 18-year period. More than 250,000 leaders and over a million subordinates have completed the LPI and the reliabilities have consistently ranged above the .60 range suggested by Aiken (1997). The reliability range for the LPI is between .81 and .91 (Chen, 2007, p. 54). While there tends to be a slight difference between the LPI-Self reliability (between .75 and .87) and the LPI-Observer (between .88 and .92) the ranges still demonstrate the stability of the instrument (p. 54).

3.8. Study Subject/or Study Participants

This case study (Chen, 2007) focused on the population of elementary school principals and teachers in the Region VI Education Service Center in Huntsville, Texas. Study participants were selected using the stratified sampling method. After excluding the private and charter schools from the sampling pool, the researcher used the criteria of student population to

subgroup the districts within the region. As a result, the researcher was able to identify eight total districts (four large and four small) for the sample population. Of the 20 schools that participated in the study, only four did not have a student population that would be considered Economically Disadvantaged. Subsequently, 144 of the 224 surveys distributed to teacher leaders of this selected population were completed. Additionally, 13 of the 20 principal surveys were completed.

3.9. Data Collection

The researcher followed the Texas A & M IRB protocol and, upon IRB approval, reached out to the identified districts via email and physical mail in order to gain consent to perform the study at their site. Once approved by the districts, the researcher reached out via email to the potential participating principals and requested the names of the lead teachers so that surveys could be sent to them. The researcher averted an obstacle by providing the needed number of surveys to principals who were uncomfortable with revealing the names of their lead teachers. The researcher then proceeded to send out 20 personalized packets to each principal. The principals then distributed the materials to the lead teachers. The packets that were distributed to the lead teachers contained “a cover letter to teacher leaders, a demographic sheet for teacher leaders, a Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer, and a self-addresses prepaid envelope” (Chen, 2007, p.57). The packets that the principals received were identical, except that principals received the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self. Both the lead teachers and principals had two weeks to complete and return the materials. The researcher did plan accordingly for non-respondents. After the initial two-week period, the researcher then followed up with postcards to both non-responding lead teachers and principals. In addition, follow-up letters and replacement surveys were sent out. The complete data collection process consisted of ten weeks.

3.10. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The researcher used varying descriptive data, which included, but were not limited to means, frequencies, percentages and standard deviations, to report the results of the LPI data. In addition, the AEIS data were reported to determine the impact, if any, distributed leadership had on student achievement.

3.11. Findings

The entire study was analyzed with a focus on a distributed, democratic perspective. Instead of viewing leadership from a top-down viewpoint, the researcher focused on a flatter viewpoint regarding leadership. The researcher noted that Timperley (2005) cautioned that distributed leadership could result in a larger distribution of ineffectiveness. With this in mind, the researcher focused on “differential effectiveness of leadership on formal roles in schools, such as teacher leaders” (Chen, 2007, p. 61). As a result, the study examined the effectiveness of elementary school principals’ leadership practices.

The demographic data collected during the study included respondents’ gender, age, highest educational level, total years of experience, and number of years in current position. First, the demographic data revealed that 71% of principal respondents and 94% of teacher leader respondents were female. This gender composition is consistent with the elementary school setting. Secondly, the descriptive data showed that the majority of the principals (43%) and teacher leaders (32%) fell in the age range of 31-40. Thirdly, the majority of principals indicated that the Master’s level was their highest educational level, while the Bachelor’s was the predominate highest educational level among teacher leaders. Fourth, 64% of the participating principals indicated that they had 1-5 years of principalship experience. However, the majority of

teacher leaders indicated that they had 1-10 (39%) and 11-20 (39%) years of teaching experience. Lastly, 86% of participating principals indicated that they had been in their current position 1-5 years. The majority of the lead teachers indicated that they had been in their current position for 0-5 years.

The researcher indicated that only the principals' leadership practices (observer) (Chen, 2007) were used in the statistical data analysis, and further stated that the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for these data were reliable. The researcher had to eliminate three of the 14 participating schools due to insufficient data. Therefore, 11 sets of lead teacher data were analyzed. The researcher utilized the testing data from the TAKS assessment as a measurement of academic achievement.

School 1 Findings

School 1 had a student population of 50% white and 50% minority, and only 25% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as "Exemplary" during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 7% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal's and teacher leaders means were higher (Chen, 2007). In relation to the five practices, the principal rated herself higher than the teacher leaders on all but one practice. Challenging the Process was the principal's lowest self-ranked practice, while Encouraging the Heart and Inspiring a Shared Vision were the principal's highest self-ranked practices. In contrast, teacher leaders viewed Modeling the Way to be the lowest ranked principal practice. Encouraging the Heart and Enabling Others to Act were the two highest ranked principal practices as viewed by the teacher leaders. Based on the findings, the researcher surmised that the practices of Encouraging the Heart and Enabling Others to Act might have a connection to steady student achievement (Chen, 2007).

School 2 Findings

School 2 had a student population that consisted of 50% white, 30% Hispanic, and 50% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as “Academically Acceptable” during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 4% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ mean score was near the normative data (Chen, 2007). In relation to the five practices, the principal rated herself higher than the teacher leaders in three of the five practices. Ironically, the principal and teacher leaders shared matching perceptions in regard to ranking Inspiring a Shared Vision, the lowest performing practice, and Enabling Others to Act as the best-performed practice (Chen, 2007). Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that the increase in the student achievement could be linked to the positive impact of the principal Enabling Others to Act.

School 4 Findings

School 4 had a student population of 50% White and 50% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as “Recognized” during the years of 2004-2006, with an overall academic decline of -5% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ mean score was below the normative data. In relation to the five practices, there were a few contrasts between the principal’s and teacher leaders’ mean scores. The principal ranked their practice of Inspiring a Shared Vision extremely low, while the teacher leaders indicated this as the highest perceived practice. The decrease in the achievement during this time period led the researcher to surmise a possible connection between Inspiring a Shared Vision and academic achievement (Chen, 2007).

School 5 Findings

School 5 had a student population that consisted of 60% White, 40% minority, and 30% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school experienced a positive rate of 9% growth during the years of 2004-2006. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal's and teacher leaders' means were higher in four of the five practices. Only the practice of Challenging the Process was perceived lower by the principal. Overall, the principal's means scores were a bit lower than the teacher leaders', but the scores provide relatively similar perceptions. Both the principal and teacher leaders ranked Enabling Others to Act as the highest perceived practices. The researcher drew a connection between this finding and the 9% growth of the three-year period and concluded that there may be a connection between Enabling Others to Act and academic achievement (Chen, 2007).

School 7 Findings

School 7 had a student population that consisted of 50% White, 30% Hispanic, and over 60% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as "Recognized" during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 2% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal's and teacher leaders' mean scores were much greater. The principal's mean scores were higher than the teacher leaders' in four of the five practices. There was a contrast in the lowest perceived practice. Teacher leaders perceived Challenging the Process as the lowest perceived practice, while the principal ranked Inspiring a Shared Vision as their lowest. However, both the principal and teacher leaders ranked Enabling Others to Act as the highest perceived practice. This finding caused the researcher to notice the trend that in academically successful schools they discussed, teacher leaders perceived the practice of Enabling Others to Act highest (Chen, 2007).

School 8 Findings

School 8 had a student population that consisted of at least 50% White, 30% African American, 20% Hispanic and Asian, and 60% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as “Recognized” during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 16% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ means scores were higher or close to the normative data. In relation to the five practices, both the principal and teacher leaders ranked Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart the highest perceived practices. Considering the large academic growth during the three-year period, the researcher concluded that Enabling Others to Act could have an intricate role in regard to academic achievement (Chen, 2007).

School 11 Findings

School 11 had a student population that consisted of 33% White, 33% African American and Asian, and more than 70% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school has been classified as “Recognized” during the years of 2004-2006, with an overall academic growth of 16% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ means scores were higher than the normative data. In relation to the five practices, Encouraging the Heart and Enabling Others to Act were ranked highest by both the principal and teacher leaders. The findings from the LPI, along with the double-digit academic growth, led the researcher to believe that the practices of Encouraging the Heart and Enabling Others to Act may have positive impacts on academic achievement (Chen, 2007).

School 12 Findings

School 12 had a student population that consisted of 80% White, 20% Hispanic, and more than half of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been

classified as “Academically Acceptable” during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 13% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ means scores were higher than the normative data. The principal ranked Encouraging the Heart as the highest practice, while the teacher leaders ranked Inspiring a Shared Vision as the highest perceived practice. The researcher concluded that based on the continued academic growth that maybe the growth was associated with the common vision and recognition of teachers’ efforts in fulfilling the vision (Chen, 2007).

School 13 Findings

School 13 had a student population that consisted of 60% White, 40% minority, and 35% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as “Recognized” during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 1% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ means scores were higher than the normative data. Teacher leaders indicated that Enabling Others to Act was the highest ranked perceived practice. The researcher noted that this finding was consistent with other academically successful schools (Chen, 2007).

School 15 Findings

School 15 had a student population of 50% White and 50% of the population was labeled At-Risk. The school had been classified as “Recognized” during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic achievement decline of 6% during this time period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ means scores were higher than the normative data. In relation to the five practices the lowest rated practice by the teacher leaders was Challenging the Process and the highest rated practice by the teacher leaders was Encouraging the Heart. Based on the academic achievement decline and the LPI findings, the

researcher concluded that teachers may recognize the efforts on the part of the principal, but the lack of risk taking on the part of the principal could be an impetus for academic achievement decline (Chen, 2007).

School 16 Findings

School 16 had a student population of 50% White, and more than 50% of the population was economically disadvantaged. The school had been classified as “Recognized” during the years of 2004-2006 with an overall academic growth of 2% during this period. In comparison to the normative LPI means, both the principal’s and teacher leaders’ means scores were higher than the normative data. In relation to the five practices, both the principal and the teacher leaders ranked the practice of Enabling Others to Act as the highest (Chen, 2007).

3.12. Conclusions

This case study was viewed through the lens of distributed leadership. The researcher identified 6 major conclusions based on the findings of this study. First, there tends to be a positive impact on academic achievement when principals and teacher leaders collaborate. Second, attempts by leaders to carry out a common vision without assistance from teacher leaders could negatively impact academic achievement. Thirdly, it is perceived that teacher leaders have a need to see principals take on challenges, seek out challenging opportunities to change things, and grow. Fourth, the recognition and celebration of teacher leaders’ contributions appears to have a positive, though indirect, impact on academic achievement. Fifth, although there was no particular link determined, it appeared that principals’ self-perceptions had some effect on academic achievement. Lastly, the positive impacts of the practices of Enabling Others to Act and Inspiring a Shared Vision on academic achievement may suggest that

distributed leadership “is most likely to contribute to school improvement and to build school capacity for improvement” (Chen, 2007, p.114).

3.13. Limitations

The researcher identified key limitations to this case study. First was the participation rate of only 11 schools in Region VI of Texas. The limited response rate limits the ability of the results to be considered relevant across the region, let alone outside of the region. Secondly, the personal biases of the respondents could have affected the results of the survey instrument. Thirdly, the limitation of only including elementary schools in the Texas area limits the applicability of the results for areas and grade levels outside of this scope. Lastly, the researchers’ own interpretations and deductions of the data could limit the implications of the findings (Chen, 2007).

3.14. Summary

This case study was viewed through the lens of distributed leadership. The researcher noted that leadership is considered important to school reform; however, recent research suggests that this leadership should not be the responsibility of one person. In order to alter the traditional one-person approach, the researcher suggests a reconfiguration of leadership in schools. The researcher’s suggestion is the use of distributed leadership since data have suggested its effectiveness. The data from this case study yielded two major takeaways: (1) the sharing of decision-making and goal setting by principals with teachers tends to increase academic achievement, and (2) lack of innovation and vision on the part of the principal tends to result in less academic achievement progress. The researcher provided recommendations based on the research findings. In regard to educational practice, the researcher suggested that additional research be done in the area of principals’ distributed leadership behaviors. Also, the researcher

suggested that school districts utilize the components of distributed leadership in developing professional development and pre/in-service trainings for their future leaders. The findings of this case study also led the researcher to recommend that schools be viewed as “professional learning communit[ies] where teachers should have the opportunity to innovate and change, especially those in formal leadership positions” (Chen, 2007, p. 116). Lastly, in regard to recommendations for practice, it was recommended that colleges and universities incorporate the view of distributed leadership into their principal preparatory programs. The researcher included recommendations for future research as well. It was recommended that additional studies examine the importance of collaboration and encouragement in not only elementary, but high school settings as well. Also, student demographic information and school size should be incorporated as variables to determine if relationships exist between principals’ distributed leadership behaviors and student achievement. Lastly, the researcher recommended that “more longitudinal studies be conducted on principals that demonstrate high degrees of distribution” (Chen, 2007, p. 117). In regard to recommendations for policy, the researcher suggested that distributed leadership not be considered the fix to workload issues within schools and districts. The researcher cautioned that distributed leadership takes time, planning and diligence to implement and maintain.

3.15. Case Study #2

Author: Dawson, D.

Title: Leadership Practices That Enhance Reading Achievement for African American Males: A Case Study

Year: 2010

3.16. Purpose

This mixed-method case study (Dawson, 2010) was conducted using the theoretical framework of Victor Vroom's (1964) Theory on motivation, which is rooted in Bandura's (Bandura & Walters, 1963) Social Learning on the leadership Theory. The research focused practices that improved academic achievement among African American males. The researcher paid special attention to cultural insensitivity and its impact on African American male students' reading achievement. The researcher utilized principal interviews, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), and the 12 Essential Principals Checklist in order to collect data. In addition, the researcher used the two survey instruments to collect principal rating data from English Language Arts teachers at each school. The data in this case study were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings of this study suggested that minority children and academic achievement of African American males are impacted by a lack of necessary educational resources. Also, the findings indicated a relationship between schools that had a high percentage of diversity practices and standardized test scores.

3.17. Hypothesis and Research Question

The research questions for this case study were twofold. The first research question, which centers on the cultural sensitivity, was:

1. What impact, if any, does cultural sensitivity incorporated into principals' leadership practices have on improving academic achievement for African American males in reading?

The second question, which focused on the critical framework, was:

2. Do these practices align with what the research says will improve academic achievement for African American males in reading? (Dawson, 2010, p. 21).

3.18. Methodology/Type of Study

3.19. Research Design

The researcher utilized the descriptive research methodology. The researcher indicated that while the process of descriptive research methodology is tedious, it allows for a clear and detailed presentation of data findings. The case study incorporated interviews, observations and surveys to obtain the needed data. The researcher utilized the case study method because it provided the opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis of a particular interest, which, in this case, was the reading achievement of middle school African American males. The case study method allows the researcher to “provide practical background information for planning serious investigations of a particular human subject or environment, and illustrate more generalized statistical outcomes” (Dawson, 2010, p. 60).

3.20. Study Subject/or Study Participants

The researcher (Dawson, 2010) sought to identify a specific issue within a research problem. Since the case study centered on the reading achievement of African American males, the researcher decided to utilize the purposive, non-probability sampling method. This sampling method does not allow for all individuals within the population to be represented equally; however, it does not overlook the overall population, but it may or may not represent the population truly. The population sample used for this study specifically represents the African American Title I urban population of Clarke County Schools. The purposive, non-probability sampling method allowed the researcher to identify the specific schools that would allow for data collection that would yield further insight into the specific problem of the case study. Only five urban high poverty Title I middle schools met the profile specific to this case study. Of the five schools solicited, only three participated in the study.

3.21. Data Collection

The researcher (Dawson, 2010) obtained appropriate approval for the study from the district's coordinator of curriculum and instruction. The researcher utilized 2 surveys and face-to-face interviews in order to collect data. The Principal Instructional Management Rating scale was used to collect data about general leadership practices. According to Hallinger & Murphy (1985), "The PIMRS was developed with the cooperation of the Milpitas (California) Unified School District, Richard P. Mesa, Superintendent. As a research instrument, it meets professional standards of reliability and validity and has been used in over 150 studies of principal leadership in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, and Asia" (p.3). While this survey can identify the general practices that leaders use for attaining achievement, another instrument was needed to address the practices used for those students who were still not having success. Thus, the researcher also utilized the 12 Essential Principals survey, which focused on diversity in education practices. Each of the surveys was implemented using the Likert scale as a means of rating responses. The two surveys were completed by three participating principals and teachers at each school. In addition, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the principals using Kathleen Nogay's interview questions, which allowed principals to elaborate on their leadership practices for African American males in reading. The participants were given a week to complete the surveys. The survey and interview results were collected, put into tables, analyzed and interpreted.

3.22. Data Analysis

The researcher (Dawson, 2010) determined the validity and reliability of the correlation between the student PACT scores and the principals' leadership practices through the use of Conclusion Validity. Trochim (2006) defines Conclusion Validity as "the degree to which

conclusions we reach about relationships in our data are reasonable” (p. 1). Also, the researcher indicated that the reliability of the PIMRS instrument was sufficient, as it has retained a minimum of .78 reliability coefficient over a 13-year period.

3.23. Findings

The findings from this case study highlighted key practices and trends at the participating schools. Overall, of the five schools that participated in the study, only one was able to decrease the number of students scoring Below Basic in ELA on the PACT, from 2007-2008. The findings for this case study can best be surmised by examining each of the three schools individually (Dawson, 2010).

Douglass MacArthur Academy Findings

Based on the interview of the principal of this school, the researcher identified some key findings. First, the school utilizes a Universal County Curriculum in regard to what is taught and the pace at which it is taught. The principal indicated that this county curriculum was the foundation of the school’s vision and mission. Any variations from this curriculum are frowned upon by the county; thus, it is difficult to alter instruction to meet the specific needs of the students. Second, the principal emphasized the impact of outside factors that impact the achievement of the students at the school, such as violence, drugs, and home environments. The principal identified himself as an instructional leader and suggested that this leadership approach has helped to improve achievement. In addition, the principal said that the school incorporates mentor programs and gender-based classroom settings as strategies for improving student achievement. The school experienced a 5% increase in the number of students scoring Below Basic on the PACT during the 2007-2008 school year. The PIMRS and Essential Principals Checklist surveys provided additional findings from the school. The PIMRS survey data

indicated that the highest perceived behaviors of the principal were Supervise and Evaluate Instruction and Provide Incentive for Learning. This finding appears to support the interview data in which the principal identified as an instructional leader. However, the two lowest ranked practices from the PIMRS were Protect Instructional Time and Maintain High Visibility. This finding would suggest a contrast between the principal claiming to be an instructional leader and teacher perceptions. The Essential Principal Checklist survey data indicated that the highest perceived practice by the principal, in regard to cultural sensitivity, was Learning about Values Shared by All Cultures. The lowest perceived practices in regard to cultural sensitivity were Equitable Funding and Social Skills for Effective Interaction (Dawson, 2010).

Highland Park Middle School Findings

The interview with the principal from this middle school revealed that 50% of the students in the school scored in the 35th percentile with regard to PACT testing. The principal also revealed that the school had done away with specific reading intervention programs because the programs were not yielding results. It was indicated that an established vision was present at the school and many of the decisions were based on this vision. Lastly, the principal's interview revealed that the principal felt inadvertent and negative messages were being sent by the staff to students. The principal said that staff interactions and behaviors with students may be sending messages of low expectation, negative perception and indifference to students. The data from the PIMRS revealed that the highest ranked principal practices were Supervise and Evaluate Instruction, and Coordinate the Curriculum. On the other hand, the lowest rated principal practice was Protect Instructional Time. It should be noted that the school experienced a 3% increase in the percentage of students scoring Below Basic during the 2007-2008 school years. The Essential Principal Checklist data showed that the highest perceived practice in relation to

cultural sensitivity was Equitable Opportunities for All Students. Lastly, the two lowest ranked practices were Creating Crosscutting Group Membership and Professional Development (Dawson, 2010).

Booker T. Washington Middle School Findings

Booker T. Washington Middle School had a 17% increase in the number of students scoring Below Basic on the PACT between 2007-2008. The principal interview provided some insights about the workings of the school. First, the principal indicated that the school had a data-driven instructional approach. Secondly, the principal that the school had implemented extended professional development opportunities for teachers in order to increase student achievement. Third, the use of the county curriculum and clear expectations and accountability were part of the instructional environment. Lastly, it was noted through the interview that the principal is conscious of the need for cultural sensitivity and has worked to incorporate it into the culture of the school. The PIMRS survey results indicated that the two most perceived principal practices were Monitor Student Progress and Protect Instructional Time. These results seem to support the assertion by the principal that the school is data-driven. The lowest ranked practice was Provide Incentive for Teachers. The Essential Principal Checklist showed that in regard to cultural sensitivity, the highest ranked principal practice was Learning About Values Shared by Others, which is in keeping with the assertions made by the principal during the face-to-face interview. The lowest ranked principal practice was Creating Crosscutting Group Membership (Dawson, 2010).

3.24. Conclusions

The researcher sought to answer the research question of “What impact, if any, does cultural sensitivity incorporated into principals’ leadership practices have on improving

academic achievement for African American males in reading?” (Dawson, 2010, p.111). The findings for this research question were varied. While the findings from the 12 Essential Principals Checklist report indicated that all three schools were engaged in multiple leadership practices, the results also highlighted areas needed for improvement. All three schools demonstrated a need to improve in the practices of professional development, opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities other than athletics, and socially constructed knowledge. While these practices are not an exhaustive list, they emerged as the top practices needing improvement at all participating schools. The results from the PIMRS revealed that all three schools were engaged in all ten areas of practice, with the exception of Booker T. Washington, which was not engaged in providing incentives for teachers. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that “principals who implemented more diversity practices had higher standardized examination scores than principals who implemented fewer diversity practices” (Dawson, 2010, p. 113).

The researcher also sought to answer the research question of “Do these practices align with what the research says will improve academic achievement for African American males in reading” (Dawson, 2010, p. 117). The results indicated that each school was limited in its practices that improved reading achievement among African American males. The results of the interview questions directly correlated with the findings of the 12 Essential Principals Checklist and, thus, the same areas of needed improvement were highlighted by the researcher. As a result of the findings, the researcher suggested that the following research questions be considered for future research:

1. Is there a difference in African American male ELA scores when led by an African American male principal?

2. Is there a difference in African American male ELA scores when leadership has undergone and implemented Bank's Diversity Checklist? (p. 116).

3.25. Limitations

The study was limited in multiple aspects. First, the small sample size limited the study's ability to be generalized, even within the same district. Second, the interview method could have been influenced by the politics, biases or self-interests of those being interviewed. Third, the researcher's own biases may have influenced the presentation of the findings, or skewed the interpretation of the interview findings. Fourth, the length of the study is limited, as the data were only over a two-year period. Last, the limitation of the grade level (middle school) hinders the ability of the study to be generalized outside of the middle school setting (Dawson, 2010).

3.26. Summary

The purpose of this case study was to examine the leadership practices that led to academic achievement among African American males, specifically in reading. In addition, the researcher also examined for practices that demonstrated cultural sensitivity on the part of principals and teachers. The use of interview and survey methods were the means of data collection for the study. The findings suggest that there is a relationship between academic achievement of African American males and lack of appropriate resources for minority students. Also, the data from this study showed that schools with a higher percentage of diversity practices had higher scores on the PACT. The researcher's ultimate conclusion was that implementing diversity practices may be related to increases in academic achievement (Dawson, 2010).

3.27. Case Study #3

Author: Valadez, D.

Title: Effective Leadership Practices of Catholic High School Principals That Support

Student Achievement

Year: 2013

3.28. Purpose

Valadez (2013) indicated that there has been a significant decline in the enrollment of students in Catholic High Schools; thus, it was imperative that a study be conducted to determine the effective leadership practices of principals of successful Catholic High Schools, in order to curb this downward trend. This mixed-methods study approach sought to identify “effective leadership skills Catholic high school principals need to embody to be successful leaders, the most prevalent leadership style among Catholic high school principals, how a Catholic high school principal creates a culture of academic success, and how a Catholic high school principal creates and maintains the school’s Catholic identity” (Valadez, 2013, p. 2). The researcher utilized a survey instrument which was completed by 35 of 50 available principals. Also, the researcher utilized individual interviews as a means of data collection. The case study resulted in multiple findings. Servant leadership was the dominant style of Catholic high school principals. The celebration of students’ achievements along with challenging rigorous college preparatory curriculum assisted in creating a culture of academic success. Also, the Catholic identity is created and maintained by the leadership modeling the way. The study adds to the body of research on Secondary Catholic Education as it reveals to principals proven means of how to “cultivate and foster cultures of academic excellence and Catholic identity” (Valadez, 2013, p. 2).

3.29. Hypothesis and Research Question

The researcher (Valadez, 2013) identified 4 research questions: (1) What effective leadership skills do Catholic high school principals need to have to be successful instructional

leaders, (2) What is the most prevalent leadership style among Catholic high school principals, (3) How does a Catholic high school principal create a culture of academic success, and (4) How does a Catholic high school principal create and maintain the school's Catholic identity? (Valadez, 2013, p. 14).

3.30. Methodology/Type of Study

3.31. Research Design

This case study was designed using mixed methods. The researcher cited Creswell (2005) as a rationale for this choice of study. The researcher noted that Creswell stated, "that when employed properly, one reaps the best features of both types of data collections. Quantitative data provides for generalizability while qualitative data offers information about the context of the setting" (Valadez, 2013, p. 36). The researcher also stated that using mixed methods allows for research questions to be more easily comprehended due to the cornucopia of information provided by the encompassing both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.32. Study Subject/or Study Participants

The study utilized participants from the pool of Catholic high school principals in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The 50 Catholic high schools present in the local area are systematically divided into parish, archdiocesan or private Catholic schools. The researcher utilized a hybrid of all three types of schools. The researcher provided a rationale for the inclusion of the various types of Catholic schools. The researcher stated, "Regardless of the type of school, each Catholic high school has an academic and religious curriculum guided by state and Archdiocesan standards and each has its own unique set of expected school-wide learning results (ESLR) (Valadez, 2013, p. 38). Purposeful sampling was utilized for both sets of data types. "Patton (2002) argued that researchers should use purposeful sampling to gather data from

information-rich sources in an effort to shed light on the research questions being answered” (Valadez, 2013, p. 38). The study also incorporated criterion sampling for both the qualitative and quantitative data. The criterion for the quantitative data was based on the principal having more than a single year of administrative experience at a Catholic high school. The criterion sampling for the qualitative data also focused on principals’ experience. The three criteria were (1) more than a single year at the same high school site, (2) strong academic program and Catholic identity had to be present at the school, and (3) near-to-full enrollment at the school site (p. 37). Based on the above-mentioned sampling methods, a total of 49 principals were administered the survey (quantitative data), and of the 49, four principals were interviewed (qualitative data).

3.33. Instrumentation

The instrument utilized to capture the quantitative data was the Catholic High School Principal Leadership Survey, which was designed by the researcher. The Catholic High School Principal Leadership Survey consisted of two portions. The first portion consisted of demographic information. The second portion entailed “35 statements which the principals had to rate using a 5-point Likert scale. The statements included in the survey were all linked to general leadership traits; a few of the questions on the survey involved mixed methods in that the first part of the question was rated using the 5-point Likert scale and the second part of the question was open ended and asked for explanation” (Valadez, 2013, p. 39). The researcher justified this survey structure by indicating that since only four principals were to be interviewed, utilizing the open-ended questioning approach in the survey would help in gaining general information about leadership styles and Catholic identity. The qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The interviews focused on “six standardized open-ended

questions and allowed for gathering rich data from a group of principals who met the predetermined set of criteria” (Valadez, 2013, p. 40). The interview protocol consisted of the following questions:

1. How does your school’s culture support student achievement?
 - a. How is the school’s academic performance assessed?
2. What leadership skills are needed to create a culture of achievement at your school?
3. How have you fostered leadership at your school?
4. Define your own leadership style.
 - a. Do you feel it is effective? Why? Why not?
5. What instructional practices are in use at your school that addresses student achievement?
 - a. Professional development?
 - b. How is effectiveness of instructional practice measured?
6. How do you cultivate your school’s Catholic identity? (p. 39).

The survey and the interview protocol were piloted by elementary school principals who volunteered to assist the researcher with the study. After three of the volunteer elementary school principals took the survey, two were interviewed. The pilot principals then provided valuable feedback, which the researcher incorporated into the instruments. The piloting process provided the researcher the ability to “strengthen the fact and content validity of the study” (Valadez, 2013, p. 40).

3.34. Data Collection

The researcher utilized Survey Monkey to administer the Catholic High School Principal Survey. 50 principals were sent an email invitation to complete the survey. An explanation of the study and link to the survey were contained in the email invite. Non-respondent principals

received a follow-up email two weeks later. The researcher allowed for another week and then called any remaining non-respondent principals in order to complete the survey process.

Qualitative data were collected via face-to-face interviews, using the interview protocol. The interviews average a time length of 45 – 60 minutes, were recorded and anonymity was ensured.

3.35. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 15.0). The researcher utilized SPSS in order to identify frequencies, means, and other descriptive data with the intent of linking specific outputs to the research questions (Salkind, 2011). Qualitative data from the interviews were coded and transcribed. The researcher cited Patton (2002) as a rationale for the mixed methods approach. Furthermore, the researcher incorporated Patton's suggestion of triangulation of data. This case study utilized three of the four types of triangulation. First, methods triangulation was used to compare the data gathered by both the qualitative and quantitative methods. Secondly, "interviews were checked against the data collected through surveys" (Valadez, 2013, p. 42), which identified as the triangulation of data sources. Lastly, theory triangulation was used by the researcher in order to examine the data from this study based on the various leadership theories researched in the past couple of decades. The researcher did acknowledge that this data set could be affected by "personal bias, anxiety, emotional state of interviewee, self-serving interests, politics and a lack of interest" (Valadez, 2013, p. 42). However, the researcher stated his confidence in the sincerity and support of the principals participating in the study.

3.36. Findings

In discussing the findings of this case study, it is imperative to restate that the study focused on answering 4 key research questions:

- (1) What effective leadership skills do Catholic high school principals need to have to be successful instructional leaders?
- (2) What is the most prevalent leadership style among Catholic high school principals?
- (3) How does a Catholic high school principal create a culture of academic success?
- (4) How does a Catholic high school principal create and maintain the school's Catholic identity? (p. 14).

The demographics of each set of data provided additional insight in regards to the research finding. The demographics of the quantitative data are the first to be analyzed. Of the 50 high schools located in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 35 principals returned the survey; a 70% participation rate. Of the 35 participating principals, males accounted for 57% while females accounted for 43%. 74% of participants self-identified as white, 23% as Latino, and 3% as mixed. The student population of the Archdiocese does not reflect the demographics of the principals leading the schools. The researcher noted, "this study did not find any significant correlation between principal ethnicity and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of a diverse demographic student population" (Valadez, 2013, p. 46). Additional studies would need to be conducted in order to determine if a correlation exists between leadership ethnicity and leadership effectiveness for diverse student communities. The researcher identified that principal effectiveness was indicated by principals' tenure at their particular school setting. The researcher noted that "those who stay at a particular site for a number of years might be better able to effect change and maintain the effective practices they have put in place" (Valadez, 2013, p. 46). The highest percentage tenure range of the participating principals was 1-5 years; 31% of principals fell into this range. The second highest percentage tenure range was 6-10 years; 29% of principals fell into this range. This was followed by 16+ years at 29%. The lowest percentage

tenure range was 11-15; only 11% of participating principals fell into this range. It is noted that only 3 of the principals have been at the same school setting for 35 years or more. The researcher indicated that “longevity and stability have proven effective in the cases of these Catholic school principals as they were able to implement certain practices and monitor them in an effort to ensure positive results” (Valadez, 2013, p. 47).

The final demographic data set that was analyzed was the type of Catholic school participating in the study. The Catholic high schools in the Los Angeles area are Archdiocesan or private and either co-educational or single sex. 19 of the 35 participating principals represented private Catholic high schools, while 16 were from Archdiocesan high schools. Five of the 19 private high schools were all boys’ schools, six of the 19 private schools were all girls’ schools, and eight were co-educational. The 16 Archdiocesan high schools consisted of four all boys’ schools, four all girls’ schools and eight co-educational schools. The researcher selectively chose four high school principals based on their number of years of experience and the type of high school they led. The interview criteria resulted in the researcher interviewing one all-girls’ school principal, one all-boys’ school principal and two co-educational school principals. The principals of these four schools self-identified as Catholics and had served at the same school site for a minimum of two years.

Findings for Question 1

What effective leadership skills do Catholic high schools principals need to have to be successful leaders? The data from this case study led the researcher to surmise that vision, mission, and innovation are the skills that effective leaders need to embody. All of the participants stated that they had a vision for their school. The researcher further indicated the extreme importance of Catholic high school leaders having a vision for their school. Valadez

(2013) stated, “given the challenge of declining enrollment [leaders must] have an idea as to what direction the school must take in order to provide its students with academic and spiritual excellence” (p. 50).

Unlike public schools, Catholic schools are dependent on patrons deeming the level of service worthy of their patronage. As a result, a vision for maintaining and increasing enrollment for Catholic school principals carries a heavier burden and level of importance than for the public school principal. In addition to identifying that vision was a key leadership practice, the study also identified that embodying the mission of the school was highly important as well. According to Hallinger and Heck (2002), embodying the mission motivates the staff and faculty that are striving for a common goal. In regard to change being imperative to the success of their schools, 77% of principals agreed, 17% were neutral and 6% disagreed. The researcher noted the juxtaposition of the responses to the vision responses. The assumption is that, in order to see a vision through, change must occur. The researcher suggested that the current state of the Catholic high school contributed to this contrast. The researcher suggested that budget constraints contribute to the principals’ inability to fully implement change in their schools. The researcher (Valadez, 2013) further stated that “participants knew the direction they want their schools to take and they embodied the mission of the schools; however, many resources are required to effect change” (Valadez, 2013, p. 52). In regard to research question 1, the researcher concluded that “vision and mission are essential qualities of an effective leader, [and] principals should embody these two concepts” (Valadez, 2013, p. 54).

Findings for Question 2

What is the most prevalent leadership style among Catholic high school principals? The researcher predetermined that three leadership styles were common among most Catholic

schools, and thus created the survey questions based on these three common styles. The researcher analyzed the data based on the three sets of leadership style questions. The first leadership style analyzed was servant leadership. The lowest ranked servant leadership statement was “I encourage my workers” (Valadez, 2013, p. 55). This statement was followed by the second highest ranked statement of “I believe service is at the core of what I do”. The highest ranked servant leadership statement was “I create a safe environment for students”. The second leadership style analyzed was transformational leadership. The transformational leadership statement that received the lowest ranking was “I assist teachers in interpreting, monitoring, and evaluating work”. The highest ranking transformational leadership statement was “I create a school culture that is supportive” (Valadez, 2013, p. 56). The researcher noted that change was not identified by the principals as being imperative to how they operate.

The researcher went on to note that due to the fact that Catholic high schools are forced to change constantly in order to keep up with the need to prepare students for the rigorous nature of college, this contrast was surprising. Lastly, authentic leadership was analyzed. The lowest ranking authentic leadership statement was “I talk about my vision for the school in terms of the potential of my staff”. The statement “I have a strong moral belief” was the highest ranked authentic leadership statement. The researcher analyzed the questions from all three leadership types and ranked the responses from highest to lowest in order to provide insight as to the most prevalent leadership style among Catholic high school principals. Of the top ten ranked leadership questions, four were authentic leadership statements, four were servant leadership statements, and two were transformational leadership statements. The number one ranked leadership statement was the servant leadership statement “I create a safe environment for students” (Valadez, 2013, p. 55- 61).

Findings for Question 3

How does a Catholic high school principal create a culture of academic success?

The researcher openly stated that while a principal, alone, cannot do all of the things needed to create a culture of academic success, the principal “sets the tone so that a culture of academic success can foster” (Valadez, 2013, p. 62). 65% of the principals definitively agreed that they create school cultures of high expectations for all students. Through the incorporation of an open-ended question in the survey, the researcher was able to gain further insight as to how the principals go about creating the culture of academic success. By analyzing the survey responses, the 18 open-ended responses and the in-person interviews, the researcher was able to make conclusions about how Catholic high school principals create a culture of academic success. The researcher determined that celebrating students’ academic success, acknowledging academic growth, and ensuring that each child not only felt worthy and valued, but also felt that they could meet and exceed expectations (Valadez, 2013, p. 64).

Findings for Question 4

How does a Catholic high school principal create and maintain the school’s Catholic identity? One hundred percent of the participants asserted that they maintain a strong Catholic identity in their school. Subsequently, only 89% deemed themselves adequately prepared to be a religious leader of a school. This led the researcher to conclude that, “all the principals recognized the importance of Catholic identity and maintained it to some degree in their schools, [however] they might not know how best to do [it]” (Valadez, 2013, p. 66). In addition, the researcher noted the responses from the face-to-face interviews supported the survey findings. More specifically, one of the principals indicated that they modeled the faith as a means of creating and maintaining a strong Catholic identity in their school. It was concluded by the

researcher that the principals understood the importance of a Catholic identity and did all that they could to maintain a culture of strong Catholic identity (Valadez, 2013, p. 67).

3.37. Conclusions

This case study analyzed 35 principals from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles area. 35 principals completed a survey, and of the 35, four were interviewed in person. The results of these combined data provided for key findings. Every principal in the study indicated that they had a vision for their school and embodied their mission. Also, the data revealed that servant leadership, authentic leadership and transformational leadership were the dominant leadership styles exhibited by the principals. The quantitative data indicated an equal distribution of leadership styles among the three (Valadez, 2013, p. 69). However, the quantitative data revealed that servant leadership was the dominant leadership style practices by the principals. Cultures of academic success were created by the principals when the principals celebrated and recognized student achievements, both excellence and growth (p. 70).

Also, the incorporation of high expectations contributed to the creation of academically successful cultures. Lastly, the data revealed that the principals recognized the importance of Catholic identity for their schools. A few of the principals indicated that they were unsure about being religious leaders. The in-person interviews revealed that some model the way for their schools in order to maintain the Catholic identity (Valadez, 2013, p. 68).

3.38. Limitations

The major limitation of the study was the small sample size. 35 of the 50 total high school principals participated in the study. Only four of the 35 were interviewed. This small sample size could have led to a skewing of the data. In addition, the local of the study may not apply to other Catholic school communities in other parts of the country. Lastly, the interview

data could have been affected by the personal biases, self-interests, etc. as stated earlier (Valadez, 2013).

3.39. Summary

This case study provided pertinent data related to educational leadership. The identification of vision and mission as key skills needed for a Catholic high school principal is in keeping with previous research findings. In addition, the celebration of students' achievements as a means of creating a culture of academic success falls in line with previous studies. The Catholic identity question was interesting in the fact that it is totally relevant to the Catholic population, but many may not see the connection to the public school setting. Although further research would be needed, it could be that no matter what identity a principal is attempting to foster in their building, this study suggests that the best means of doing so is to model the way. This case study was selected because it provided multiple perspectives on educational leadership. The locale, secondary focus and Catholic setting contribute to the research pool (Valadez, 2013).

3.40. Chapter Summary

The three case studies provided pertinent data in regard to leadership practices and student achievement. More specifically, the case studies provided insight into practices that lead to reading achievement. The data would suggest that many of the practices are indirect. However, the levels of impact will be determined in Chapter 4. In order to gain a greater understanding of the data presented in each of the aforementioned case studies, the researcher will conduct a detailed comparative analysis in Chapter 4. The detailed comparative analysis will begin with an examination of emerging themes in the three case studies. Then the researcher will identify the similarities and differences in the three case studies; including, but not limited to, study participants, grade level, locale, leadership styles, achievement data, and methodologies.

Using this approach will allow the researcher to provide solutions that address the issues raised in the analysis and link those solutions to sound research.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed comparative analysis of the three case studies that were analyzed in Chapter 3. The researcher identified particular elements to compare.

The differences and similarities of the three case studies were identified based on the list of elements. The chapter will examine the differences first and then delve into the similarities. This analysis structure will allow the researcher to progress from the differences to the similarities in Chapter 4 and lead into possible solutions and recommendations that address the issues raised in the analysis and link those solutions to sound research.

4.2. Differences

4.3. Grade Level

One of the major differences amongst the case studies was the grade level that was studied in each. The first case study, Principals' distributed leadership behaviors and their impact on student achievement in selected elementary schools in Texas (Chen, 2007), focused on the primary grade levels. The elementary school setting is viewed as the foundation of the educational experience and tends to focus on more of the nurturing of student's basic skills (Etor, Mbon & Ekanem, 2013). The teacher is a central focus at this level and is deemed as the holder of knowledge. The teacher-student dynamic is dramatically different than that of the other two grade levels, and thus the behaviors of the principal leader may be different as well. The second case study, Leadership practices that enhance reading achievement for African American males: A case study (Dawson, 2010), targeted middle school student data. The middle school student ranges in age from 12-14, usually, and this stage of cognitive development may present contrasting challenges to that of the elementary or even secondary levels (Cepni, Ozsevgec &

Cerrah, 2004). Leaders at the middle school level may exhibit the same leadership behaviors as other grade level leaders, but the middle school leader's behaviors may lean more towards a particular set of behaviors simply because the middle school student population is at a different cognitive stage. The last case study, Effective leadership practices of Catholic high school principals that support student achievement (Valadez, 2013), analyzed a secondary grade level student population. At the secondary level, the teacher ideally serves as more of a facilitator than a knowledge holder. The information tends to be more specialized in regard to content and the student possesses more control over their intake of information. The leader at this level is monitored more closely via federal, state and local accountability measures and the sheer size of the student population makes the leader highly dependent on teacher content expertise and student interaction (Cooley & Shen, 2003). The behaviors exhibited by the secondary principal leader may be similar to that of the primary or middle school leaders with a variation in regard to the frequency of behavior types. The variation of the grade levels analyzed in these case studies allows for possible insights to principal leadership behaviors that transcend grade level.

4.4. Literature Review Topics

There was a variation in the literature review topics for the case studies analyzed. Case study #1 (Chen, 2007) examined multiple variations of leadership within the educational setting.

Chen (2007) reviewed the leadership topics of:

- Reconceptualization of leadership
- Distributed Leadership
- Distributed Leadership and School Improvement
- Teacher Leadership
- Site-based management in the Age of Accountability

- Leadership Effectiveness

These literature review topics demonstrate a focus on distributed leadership. This leadership style has become popular at the elementary school levels over the past decade.

Contrastingly, Dawson (2010) had a literature review focus that encompassed more topics surrounding culture, curriculum and student support. Dawson (2010) examined topics that expanded on the leadership behaviors that supported general student achievement, African American student achievement, and more specifically African American male student achievement. Dawson (2010) reviewed the literature topics of

- Gender Issues
- Teacher Expectations
- Ugbu's Cultural Ecological Theory of Low Academic Achievement
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
- Non-compliance in Public Schools
- Motivation
- Mentoring
- General Academic Achievement Practices
- Specific Academic Achievement Practices for A.A.

The topics covered dive deeper into the specifics of student achievement for a particular population, which contrasts with Chen (2007) that examined the overall leadership practices that impacted general student achievement.

Lastly, Valadez (2013) researched both leadership and Catholic high school leadership. These literature review topics provided a solid baseline of research information relating to the

case study's focus. Valadez (2013) researched the general leadership practices and drilled down to the specific Catholic leadership practices that impact achievement. Valadez (2013) examined the literature review topics of:

- Definition, Components & Traits of Leadership
 - Change agent
 - Culture
 - Flexibility
 - Focus
 - Curriculum, instruction & assessment
 - Optimizer
 - Situational awareness
 - Moral purpose
 - Understanding change
 - Building relationships
 - Creating and sharing knowledge
 - Making coherence
- Catholic H.S. leadership and its effect on education
 - Substitutional authority
 - Pedagogical authority
 - Practical authority
 - Essential authority
 - Humble authority
- Servant Leadership

These topics, when examined in the literature review, provided insight on the overall leadership research on student achievement and more specifically leadership behaviors that Catholic high school leaders embody that impact student achievement.

4.5. Locale

The location of the first case study was Huntsville, Texas (Chen, 2007). There could be morals, values and customs particular to this locale that directly or indirectly impact the school settings of the case study. The second case study was located in South Carolina (Dawson, 2010). Although this case study was conducted in a southern location, similar to Chen (2007), the eastern locale difference again could have varying cultural differences that impact the study. Lastly, the third case study was performed in Los Angeles, California. This case study falls outside of the southern region of the first two case studies. Contrastingly, the locale of the third case study tends to have a population that tends to be more liberal and progress in regard to education. The variation in the locations of the studies examined could provide insights into leadership behaviors that are applicable in multiple settings, regardless of cultural norms, values or customs.

4.6. Theoretical Framework

Chen (2007) utilized distributed leadership as the theoretical framework for the first case study. This framework lens is similar to the other two case studies in that it has a leadership focus, however, the focus does differ. Distributed leadership focuses on the leader sharing the tasks of leadership with others within the organization (Cogner & Pierce, 2003). The ultimate accountability still rests on the shoulders of the principal leader, but the leader works to cultivate the vision, build trust among the subordinates and provide the tools for success (Kocolowski, 2010). The lens of distributed leadership as a framework looks for the leadership behaviors that

promote this shared responsibility of leadership. While the behaviors may be similar to that of other leadership styles, the distributed lens can only confirm success when the leader has properly and effectively demonstrated behaviors that the organizational members deem as empowering and supportive (Hall, 2001). The principal leader could have behaviors that promote academic achievement but if the behaviors are not deemed distributed the lens of this case study would lead the researcher to consider the principal leader as ineffective. The distributed leadership lens does resemble the other two case studies' theoretical frameworks in that they all are examining the principal leaders' behaviors, but there is a contrast in what behaviors the leader should focus on implementing.

The cultural ecological theory was used by Dawson (2010) to frame the second case study. The cultural-ecological theory "considers the broad societal and school factors as well as the dynamics within the minority community" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). According to Ogbu & Simons (1998), ecology refers to the setting or environment of the minorities and culture refers to the way the minorities perceive and act in the environment (p. 158). This particular theory is based on research regarding immigrant and non-immigrant student achievement. The framework lens evaluates the leadership behaviors specifically in regard to minority student achievement, in this case study, specifically African American males. Dawson (2010) specifically viewed the principal's leadership behaviors in respect to African American male reading achievement. While the framework is not a leadership framework, it does provide a perspective in regard to the leader behaviors' impact on African American male achievement.

The principal leader may demonstrate behaviors deemed effective at increasing overall achievement, but through the lens of cultural-ecological theory the behaviors may be deemed in effective. The other two leadership frameworks differ from the cultural-ecological theory in that

distributed and instructional leadership are broad leadership theories that aim to increase overall efficiency and achievement. As a byproduct, African American males (or any non-immigrant minority group) may or may not see an increase in performance. Neither distributed nor instructional leadership specifically focus on the improvement of any particular population of students. The cultural-ecological framework lens for this case study addresses the overall leadership behaviors that impact student achievement and the leadership behaviors that impact African American male student achievement, which was the intent of the researcher. Valadez (2013) framed the third case study using instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is the organic leadership style that emerged in minority schools during the 1980s (Edmonds, 1979). This theoretical framework lens allowed Valadez (2013) to view the leadership behaviors of principals that support the notion that pedagogical, classroom management and instructional tactics are key in a principal leader's ability to impact student achievement. This framework differs from that of the distributed leadership theory framework in that distributed leadership draws on the instructional expertise of the teachers coupled with the leadership guidance of the principal leader (Beatty, 2007).

The distributed leadership framework lens helps to identify the principal leaders' ability to cultivate the teacher leaders' success, without having to know the particular pedagogical intricacies. In contrast, in the instructional leadership theory framework it is imperative for the principal to have working pedagogical knowledge in order to support teachers and lead them towards the vision. Instructional leadership theory also differs from the cultural-ecological theory in that instructional leadership is broader in scope, while the cultural-ecological theory specifically examines the instructional and perceptual implications for a specific group of students.

All three of the theoretical frameworks have merit when it comes to examining leadership behaviors and their impact on student achievement. Each provides a perspective on leadership and achievement that is crucial to improving leadership practices across the board.

4.7. Recommendations

The recommendations for the first case study were comprehensive. Chen (2007) addressed recommendations for educational practice, research and policy. The list of recommendations focused on the distributed leadership approach.

Recommendations for Practice:

- School districts should create professional developments on components of distributed leadership
 - Evaluation tools should be based on distributed leadership
- Teachers should become familiar with teacher leadership
- Schools should be viewed as professional communities
- Colleges/universities should include distributed leadership in principal preparation programs

Recommendations for Research:

- Explore teacher leaders and principal interactions on elementary and high school levels
- Student data should extend to at least five years
- Student demographics and school size should be included in research
- More longitudinal studies on high distribution principals
- Include interviews and observations
- Research different leadership tasks important features

Recommendations for Policy:

- Distributed leadership should not be viewed as a solution to workload issues
- Examine human resource capacity for coordination and collaboration
- Develop a recognition system to honor outstanding distributed leadership resulting in achievement
- Professional developments with former successful principals (especially D.L.) to train current principals.

The recommendations are clear and concise. In contrast, the second case study, Dawson (2010), provided limited recommendations. Dawson (2010) made suggestions for only future research:

- Is there a difference in African American male ELA scores when led by an African American male principal?
- Is there a difference in African American male ELA scores when leadership has undergone and implemented Bank's Diversity Checklist?

A contrast between the first two studies is clear. While the expansive list of recommendations from Chen (2007) is ideal, the Dawson (2010) recommendations do address the theoretical focus of the second case study. Dawson (2010) vaguely references practitioner implications by indicating that the research findings suggest that implementing "more diversity practices will increase student's academic achievement" (Dawson, 2007). The last case study, Valadez (2013), focused recommendations on future research. Valadez (2013) suggested the following in regard to future research:

- A larger participant pool might garner generalizable results. The study could be expanded to include other dioceses in California. There are over 130 Catholic high schools in California from which to pull participants.

- An in-depth analysis of how effective leadership in Catholic high schools effect student achievement is necessary. A study of specific leadership practices and how those affect students' grades, test scores, and college admittance would prove useful to other Catholic high school principals.
- Further study is necessary on the different effects different leadership styles have on Catholic high school communities. Certain leadership styles might be employed to target the specific needs of each school.
- Another area to consider for further research is in the area of Catholic identity. Since a significant percentage (11%) of principals indicated they did not feel adequately prepared to be the religious leader of their schools, further research in the area of how to be a lay religious leader is needed.

The limitations of the list of recommendations for the second and third case study detract slightly from the comprehensive research of each study. Unlike the first case study, the latter two case studies leave a lot to interpretation from the readers. All three case studies provide some form of recommendations. The depth and detail of the recommendations varies greatly.

4.8. Similarities

4.9. Instrumentation

The three instruments used in the three case studies were similar. Chen (2007), the first case study, utilized the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) for both the principal (LPI-S) and the teacher leaders (LPI-O) in order to collect data from the participants. The LPI instrument was developed by Kouzes and Posner. Posner granted Chen permission to utilize the instrument for her study. The LPI-S provides the researcher with a means of determining the degree to which leadership practices are conducted by leaders as perceived by themselves. The LPI-O allows for

the leader observers, in this case it was teacher leaders, to report the degree to which they perceive the leader is performing leadership practices. This contrast provides for a more comprehensive view of the actual practices being conducted by the leader. Dawson (2010), the second case study, used the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) which examines the leadership practices through the lens of instructional leadership. The PIMRS was published by Hallinger in 1982 and “has been validated as an instrument providing reliable results in studies of school leadership” (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Valadez (2013), the third case study, used The Catholic High School Leadership Survey, which measures the general leadership traits and Catholic identity and mission. This instrument was created by Valadez and piloted prior to use in the case study being discussed.

All three instruments address the measurement of leadership traits, use a Likert scale for measurement, and average 38 items per instrument. Both the LPI and PIMRS have multiple forms for the principal, the teacher, and PIMRS has a form for supervisors of the principal as well. The leadership functions of the PIMRS and the general leadership trait questions of the Catholic High School Principal Leadership Survey can be aligned with the 5 practices of the LPI as indicated by the matrix below (Figure #1).

Figure #1

LPI	Model the Way	Inspire a Shared Vision	Challenge the Process	Enable Others to Act	Encourage the Heart
PIMRS	Coordinates the Curriculum/Supervises & Evaluates Instruction/Monitors Student progress/Maintains High visibility	Frames the school's goals/Communicates The school's goals		Protects Instructional Time/Promotes Professional development	Provides Incentives for Teachers/Provides incentives for learning
Catholic High School Principal Leadership Survey	Questions 4,5,7,10,11,15,25,28, 29,30 & 21	Questions 2,3,19,21,22,27 & 35	Questions 12 & 26	Questions 1,8,13,14,20 & 36	Questions 6,9,16,17,18,23 & 24

All three instruments allow for the researchers to identify the extent to which leadership practices are reported as being implemented in the studied environment.

4.10. Participants/Population

The participants for the three studies are similar. Each of the three case studies incorporated principal participants, and one of the three included teacher leaders. The first case study by Chen (2007) surveyed 13 principals and 144 teacher leaders from four large and four small Texas districts. This participant population was conducive because Chen (2007) utilized the theoretical framework of distributed leadership so it was important for the researcher to not only have principal participation in the study but also the teacher leaders as well in order to compare the rating results. Dawson (2010), the second case study, surveyed, interviewed and observed three principals and surveyed one teacher for each principal. The participants for this study are similar to Chen (2007) because Dawson (2010) incorporated teacher participants as well. The similarity is befitting because the theoretical lens he used focused on the behaviors of the leaders specifically and the leaders' incorporation of cultural awareness in regard to increasing African American males' reading achievement, which was measured by the ratings from the leader and the teachers. The use of the Cultural Ecological Theory (Ugbu & Simons, 1989) as the theoretical framework provided a clear focus for Dawson (2010) to focus on the leaders' behaviors, the ratings of the teachers and use secondary standardized test data to rate the impact on reading achievement. Lastly, the participants for Valadez (2013), the third case study, differ slightly from the first case study, they are similar to the second case study as there is focus on principal participants. Valadez (2013) surveyed 49 principals and interviewed four principals. Valadez (2013) focused her research on the principal as the sole leader in the school and the survey and interview questions reflected this focus and demonstrated no need for teacher

participants as with the first case study. There is a strong similarity among the three case studies and the minor difference is justified by the theoretical framework of the first case study. However, each of the three case studies is clearly focused on the principal leader and their behaviors in regard to achievement.

4.11. Methodology

All three case studies are descriptive analysis case studies. The first case study, Chen (2007) is the only one of the three that differs slightly as it does not utilize the mixed methods approach. Both Dawson (2010) and Valadez (2013) use mixed methods to obtain multiple data points. While there is a slight difference, the fact that Chen (2007) incorporated both principals and teacher leaders in her participant pool allowed her to obtain a comparable whole-view perspective similar to the other two case studies. The use of the mixed methods by Dawson (2010) and Valadez (2013) served to support their focus on their respective theoretical frameworks. Dawson (2010) gained further insights in regard to the cultural leadership behaviors the principals were exhibiting. Valadez (2013) was able to further her research data through the interview process as well. The three case studies each utilized the descriptive case study methodology. The slight difference of Chen (2007) not using a mixed methods approach does not detract from the findings or integrity of the research because each study utilized the methodology that best fit their research and theoretical frameworks.

4.12. Reliability of Instruments

Each of the three researchers used reliable instruments in their case studies. Chen (2007) used the LPI instrument. The reliability of the LPI has been fortified over an 18-year period and the reliabilities have consistently ranged above the .60 range suggested by Aiken (1997). The reliability range for the LPI is between .81 and .91 (Chen, 2007, p. 54). While there tends to be a

slight difference between the LPI-Self reliability (between .75 and .87) and the LPI-Observer (between .88 and .92) the ranges still demonstrate the stability of the instrument (p. 54).

Similarly, Dawson (2010) used the PIMRS. The researcher indicated that the reliability of the PIMRS instrument was sufficient, as it has retained a minimum of .78 reliability coefficient over a 13-year period. The third case study did not utilize a nationally known or tested instrument, however it was determined to be reliable. The survey and the interview protocol used by Valadez (2013) were piloted by elementary school principals who volunteered to assist the researcher with the study. After three of the volunteer elementary school principals took the survey, two were interviewed. The pilot principals then provided valuable feedback, which the researcher incorporated into the instruments. The piloting process provided the researcher the ability to “strengthen the fact and content validity of the study” (Valadez, 2013, p. 40).

4.13. Data Collection

The data collection for the three case studies was similar. The first case study, Chen (2007), delivered 20 survey packets to the principals of the participating schools and asked that principals distribute the LPI-O to the teacher leaders in their building. The packets contained self-addressed prepaid envelopes for the return of the surveys. The researcher allowed two full weeks for the completion of the surveys by principals and teacher leaders at each site. After the initial two-week period, the researcher followed up with both non-responding principals and teacher leaders via postcards. When participants were still non-respondent the researcher sent out a follow-up letter and replacement packets. The entire process took ten weeks to complete. While Dawson (2010) used interviews, surveys and observations, the data collection was similar to that of the first case study. Dawson (2010) distributed the PIMRS to the principals of each of the three participating schools and the 8th grade English Language Arts teacher. Both were given one

week to complete the survey. In addition, the qualitative data was collected via the interview method with the principals of the three schools. The researcher used fictitious names for the schools when reporting on the data in order to insure anonymity. The similarity to that of the first case study is the distribution and collection of survey materials, and the usage of both a self and observer survey.

The incorporation of the interview method by Dawson (2010) was done because of the specific focus on clarifying the leader's behaviors when it comes to African American male reading achievement, thus additional collection methods were conducted. The third case study, Valadez (2013), used a collection procedure similar to the first two case studies. The quantitative data was collected via Survey Monkey. The researcher sent out the Catholic High School Principal Leadership Survey via email to the 50 participating principals. After two weeks, a reminder email was sent out to non-respondents. Participants who still had not responded after three weeks, were called by the researcher. This data collection procedure is similar to that of Chen (2007) and Dawson (2010). Each researcher used a survey distribution method, collection method, non-respondent procedure and a specific timeframe in order to collect their data. Valadez (2013) also used an interview method similar to Dawson (2010). Valadez (2007) conducted in-person interviews with four participating principals. The interviews were recorded and anonymity was assured on the part of the researcher. The data collection methods used in the three case studies demonstrated a focus on effective data collection procedures and assurance of anonymity.

4.14. Data Analysis

The first case study, Chen (2007), used descriptive data analysis to analyze the quantitative data collected. The analysis of the principals' and teacher leaders' survey results

were compared to each other as well as the LPI-S & LPI-O normative mean scores. The researcher also compared the LPI results to the AEIS standardized test results in order to determine correlations between the leadership practices and student achievement. This descriptive process allowed the researcher to identify multiple data points and compare them. The second case study, Dawson (2010), utilized a descriptive analysis as well. The survey results from the PIMRS leader and teacher perspective were compared. The PIMRS data was also compared to the standardized test data from each school in order to determine correlations to achievement. Dawson (2010) further analyzed the qualitative data from the principal interviews. Once the interviews were translated and coded the researcher was able to compare the interview results with standardized test scores as well. The descriptive analysis enabled the researcher to clearly identify correlations and other findings. Lastly, Valadez (2013) used an analysis method similar to the first two case studies. Valadez (2013) analyzed the quantitative data descriptively. The use of SPSS in order to analyze the survey results allowed the researcher to determine frequencies, means, and additional descriptive data. The researcher used this survey data to determine correlations with each school's standardized test scores. The qualitative data for the third case study was transcribed and coded. The researcher was then able to use triangulation in order to compare the qualitative and quantitative data based on varying leadership theories. The three case studies used similar methods, all of which were thorough. The detailed analysis allowed for each researcher to identify key findings in their respective studies.

4.15. Findings

The findings for first the case study, Chen (2007), showed that the two most teacher leader perceived leadership practices were “Enabling Others to Act” and “Encouraging the Heart”. The schools where these two leadership practices were perceived highest by teacher

leaders demonstrated positive progression when correlated with standardized test scores. The findings demonstrate support of the effectiveness of shared/distributed leadership practices. “Enabling Others to Act” and “Encouraging the Heart” are leadership practices that lend themselves to the fostering of shared/distributed leadership within a school as a means of increasing achievement. The findings also showed that two of the 11 schools experienced drops in standardized test scores as well. In one of the schools with such a drop the teacher leaders rated “Modeling the Way” and “Enabling Others to Act” as the highest perceived leadership practices. However, the leadership practice of “Inspiring a Shared Vision” was ranked lowest. At the second school experiencing a drop in standardized test scores the teacher leaders rated “Enabling Others to Act” and “Encouraging the Heart” as the two highest perceived leadership practices. Contrastingly, this school experienced a three-year decline in standardized test scores. The findings suggested that the decline might be due to the low rating of the leadership practice of “Challenging the Process. The overall findings for the first case study suggest that while the leadership practices of “Encouraging the Heart” and “Enabling Others to Act” contribute to increased academic achievement, it is imperative that leaders continue to incorporate the other three leadership practices as well in order to sustain academic achievement. In comparison to the second case study, Dawson (2010), similar results were found. In regard to the PIMRS results the findings showed that each of the three schools rated the following leadership practices highest, all of which can be aligned to the five LPI practices for a clearer comparison:

- Supervise and Evaluate Instruction (Model the Way)
- Provide Incentive for Learning (Encourage the Heart)
- Coordinate Curriculum (Model the Way)
- Monitor Student Progress (Model the Way)

- Protect Instructional Time (Enable Others to Act)

These findings from the second case study show that the principals in this study have focused their efforts on the instructional leadership approach. However, similar to the results of the first case study, the principals in the second case study demonstrate a lack of balance in regard to leadership practices. The lack of balance may have contributed to the fact that all three of the leaders in the second case study experienced a decline in standardized test scores over a two-year period.

PACT Scores for Year 2007 & 2008

% of Students Scoring Below Basic in ELA

	School A	School B	School C
2008	38	49.5	73.7
2007	33	46.3	56.1

The findings suggest that there was a focus on the part of the participating principals to engage in instructional leadership practices. This would be in keeping with national trends. The finding from the second case study are similar to the first case study in that a trending leadership model is being incorporated by principal leaders in each case.

The findings from the second case study also highlight the areas needing improvement based on the results from the 12 Essential Principles survey. The survey results showed that the following areas were in need of improvement at the three schools:

- Professional Development (Enable Others to Act)
- Socially Constructed Knowledge (Enable Others to Act)

- Opportunities to Participate in Extra-Curricular Activities other than sports (Encourage the Heart)
- Learning about Stereotyping (Challenge the Process)
- Creating Cross-cutting group memberships (Challenge the Process)
- Learning about Values Shared by all Cultures (Encourage the Heart)
- Social Skills for Effective Instruction (Enabling Others to Act)
- Reducing Fear/Anxiety (Encourage the Heart)
- Collaborative Decision Making (Enable Others to Act)
- Assessing Complex Cognitive & Social Skills (Enabling Others to Act)
- Equitable Opportunities for All Students (Enable Others to Act)

The findings show that the needs for improvement are vast among the three schools. They also support the findings from the first case study because the findings show that a comprehensive leadership approach is needed in order to establish and maintain academic achievement. The findings for the third case study, Valadez (2013), revealed results that were similar to the first two case studies. The survey results from the Catholic High School Principal Leadership Survey found that 100% of the participants indicated that they had a vision for the school, 80% indicated they embodied the mission of the school and 77% indicated that change was at the core of what they did. The qualitative data from the interviews with principals found that the principals identified specific practices that they believed led to their schools' success:

- Shared stories of success
- Tried to inspire staff to believe the students can meet expectations
- Let staff make decisions that best served the needs of their kids
- Celebrate students' academic success

- Acknowledge academic growth
- Ensure every single student felt valued, worthy and capable of meeting and exceeding expectations

In addition, the survey results and interview results suggested the following:

- “Vision and mission are essential qualities of an effective leader” (p. 54).
- “Principals should embody these two concepts as they provide a foundation on which to build successful schools” (p. 54).

The findings from the third case study suggest that the principals focused on the foundations of academic success and leadership traits that correlated with setting such a foundation. Also, the principals in this study were found to have implemented a balance of leadership behaviors that addressed the five leadership practices of the LPI. These findings are in keeping with the results of the previous two cases studies. The previous two case studies’ findings suggested that a lack of focus on a balance of leadership practices can result in a decline in academic achievement.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Summary

Reading achievement at the secondary levels continues to be problematic for our nation's schools. The limited research on the topic only exacerbates the issue. This case study was conducted in order to add to the body of research on the topic and highlight the need for more efforts to ascertain the leadership practices that can lead to greater reading achievement at the secondary levels. This comparative case study analysis examined three case studies that had varying theoretical frameworks and instructional settings in order to determine what leadership practices have positive impacts on reading achievement. The researcher embarked on this process in a progressive manner, in that it was believed that by first identifying leadership practices that lead to overall achievement, at any grade level, it would serve the body of research on the topic as a foundational springboard for continued research.

The findings from this research clearly indicated that multiple leadership practices are currently being employed in order to bring about improved academic achievement. However, it is also evidenced by national reading data, that something is amiss in regard to leadership practices and reading achievement. In each of the three case studies examined, a specific leadership approach was identified as being the dominant leadership approach by the principal. Existing research has shown that no one leadership approach works in every school situation, and leaders must find approaches that work best for their particular situation (Dwyer, Lee, Rowan & Bossert, 1983). With this statement in mind, combined with the findings from the case studies analyzed, certain conclusions can be made.

5.2. Final Conclusions

Contrary to some research, transformational leadership is not outdated. It is clear that transformational leadership remains a pivotal leadership approach in today's educational settings, as evidenced by the case studies analyzed in this research. There has been a nonsensical push for new and more trendy approaches to leadership in the past few years. However, the national data on reading achievement would suggest that this trend has not been effective. When examining the leadership approaches from the three case studies the similarities become more and more clear.

The key behaviors of instructional leadership and distributed leadership can easily be encapsulated into the five leadership practices of effective leaders as identified by Kouzes and Posner. This by no means minimizes the benefits of these two leadership types, but rather reveals that while they each possess a specialized focus, they are grounded in basic fundamental leadership practices. What does that mean for leaders? How does this relate to reading achievement?

5.3. Discussion

The longstanding practice and philosophy of public education is that students, over a 12-year period, build up skills, knowledge and learn to apply these skills and knowledge as productive citizens of society. Periodically through this building up process, students are evaluated in order to determine their levels of mastery. I think that the approach to creating sustained reading achievement should have a similar model.

All educational leaders should be trained in the transformational leadership approach as a foundation for leadership skills as they are proven to increase achievement and are transferable to most leadership settings. After the foundation of leadership practices is established,

educational leaders should be trained in the instructional leadership approach. Instructional leadership builds on transformational leadership by focusing the leadership practices on the specific task of academic achievement through instructional knowledge. Research has shown that instructional leadership yields a three to four times higher impact than transformational leadership. However, as the case studies' findings showed, without the consistent implementation of the fundamental leadership practices of transformational leadership, academic achievement is not sustained. The educational leader that is trained with a foundation in transformational and instructional leadership would then be prepared to embark on distributed leadership. As the literature has attested, distributed leadership requires the implementation of certain norms and processes in order to be effective. By rooting the educational leader in the transformational and instructional leadership approaches the leader can then utilize the prior two approaches in order to empower and share leadership with subordinates. Because the leader is well established in the fundamentals of leadership and instructional knowledge, they are more apt to be able to set the proper stage for distributed leadership and avoid the pitfall of implementing distributed leadership as a dumping of responsibilities.

After analyzing the available research, I began pondering the major issue at hand: how can educational leaders positively impact reading achievement? Luckily, the research spoke loud and clear. The educational leader must possess a basic foundation of leadership skills that can be applied to various situations. Transformational leadership has been studied and proven to be effective in the educational field, therefore I selected it as the foundational leadership approach for the Reading Achievement Leadership Training Model. Transformational leadership would provide the leader with basic leadership skills that they could transfer into any setting and use to increase improvement in their schools. However, the research made it clear that transformational

alone would not yield the results need for drastic improvements. Since instructional leadership yields a four percent higher achievement rate than transformational I decided that it should be added as the second tier of the model. As the research indicates, a leader solely focused on instructional leadership may have an unbalanced leadership approach, but with the leader already possessing transformational leadership skills they are more equipped to maintain balance than if they were trained in only the instructional leadership style. Lastly, I wanted to address the issue of leadership being an individual role. With all the pressures placed on educational leaders maintaining a balance of leadership can be problematic. Implementing the distributed leadership style training as the final tier of the Reading Achievement Leadership Training Model provides a catalyst for the leader to cultivate a professional learning community. A distributed leadership style, when implemented properly, can have even greater impacts on achievement than any one leadership style. However, I designated it as the final tier because in order for distributed leadership to work certain norms and expectations must be set. I felt that by having a foundation in transformational leadership coupled with instructional leadership the newly trained educational leader would be well equipped to properly implement and maintain a distributed leadership style within their building, all with expectation of increased reading achievement.

As depicted in Figure #2 below, there should be a building up of the educational leader which ultimately would lead to reading achievement at the secondary levels. Similar to the building of pyramids and even the building of our students, for that matter, the process takes time. It will be imperative that educational leaders are given the time to acquire and implement the new approach. As the research has indicated, as well as the findings from the case studies analyzed, there is no quick fix!

Figure #2: Reading Achievement Leadership Training Model



The future of our society rests in the hands of state, county, and district leaders. In order to reverse the negative trend of declining reading achievement scores, leaders must be properly trained and equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to produce positive reading achievement results. The state, county and district leaders must be willing to forgo trendy quick fixes and begin the process of creating effective educational leaders. One cannot proclaim that 12 years is needed to build up a student, but only 1-2 years is needed to build an effective educational leader, because ironically the leader is simply an adult student.

5.4. Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following in terms of future research and implications for practice.

5.5. Recommendations for practice

The review of literature and findings from the case studies analyzed in this research suggest that there is a need for more emphasis on transformational leadership as a fundamental starting point in training new educational leaders. Instructional knowledge and skills can then be added into the training, followed by distributed leadership behaviors. Local educational systems should develop on-going tiered professional developments for leaders that focus on the three leadership approaches described. Evaluation processes should reflect the tiered perspective and allow for adequate time for proper implementation of each tier.

Instructors need to be trained on research-based reading strategies. Also, teachers should have professional development opportunities that train them on distinguishing between poor decoders and poor comprehenders. Lastly, teacher leadership training should be mandatory for lead teacher positions such as department chairs, teacher coordinators, and testing coordinators in preparation for the implementation of the third tier of distributed leadership.

5.6. Recommendations for future research

The need for additional research on leadership practices and reading achievement at the secondary level is evidenced by the literature review. Future study should focus on high school leaders whose schools are currently experiencing high reading achievement. Also, a comparative examination of the reading achievement for self-reported transformational, instructional and distributed leaders over a five-year period may provide additional insight on the claims made in this research.

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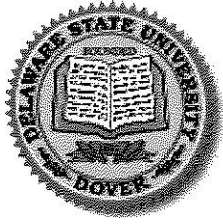
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Appendix



DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects Protection Committee

March 21, 2017

Charles A. Guilford, III
Department of Education
College of Health, Education and Public Policy
Delaware State University
1200 N. DuPont Hwy
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Charles,

Delaware State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB)-Human Subjects Protection Committee has reviewed your project "Effective Leadership Practices and Reading Achievement". After review of application, the Committee has granted an exemption from the IRB as it meets a Category of Exempt Research specified in 45 CFR 46.101 (b).

Please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at 302-857-6834 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Friel
Chairperson, Human Subjects Committee

(IRB) ckh