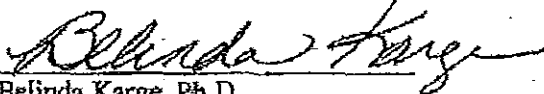# ACCEPTANCE

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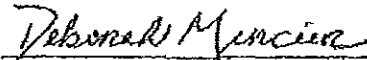
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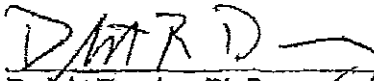Committee Member

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THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS IN URBAN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS OF SOUTH LOS ANGELES THAT IMPACT THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL REFORM

by

Robin L. Benton

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
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Doctor of Education
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the existing influences faced by today's urban inner-city elementary school principals that impact the successful implementation of reform strategies as measured by student achievement data. The study examines dynamics such as the characteristics and qualities, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, school community, and political influences encountered by principals assigned to low-income urban inner-city schools and the impact of these forces on student achievement in South Los Angeles elementary schools. It utilizes a mixed method design phenomenological approach. The quantitative phase entails the use data from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)-5X from Mind Garden Institute and the Principal Instrumental Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) authored by Hallinger (1982). Information was collected from interviews with principals, assistant principals, and approximately 30% of classroom teachers at two underperforming schools. Grounded within the Coherence Framework by Fullan and Quinn (2015) and the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Coherence Framework by Childress, Elmore, Grossman and King (2011), the study provides an insight into the effectiveness of the principal position and its impact on school reform efforts.

The findings of this study revealed the transformative style of leadership is most preferred as it allows stakeholder voice in decision-making. Data also verified that urban inner-city principals devote the least amount of time in their day to instructional leadership activities. These activities are focused on framing the school's goals and coordinating the school curriculum and require emphasis on engaging in the behaviors that develop the school's learning

climate. Moreover, several themes emerged from the study. These included (a) teacher "voice" in school-wide decisions impacts reform efforts; (b) the school community severely impacts the principal's decision-making towards school improvement; (c) the principal's style of leadership influences teacher commitment; (d) the political/district influences can limit reform efforts.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Finding a solution for improving the academic performance of American public schools

has been the focus of state and government officials for decades. At the start of the 21st century,

bipartisan consensus believed that public education system was broken. Many alleged that

educators were content with the status quo of low student performance and were mainly

concerned with their pensions more than student success (Ravitch, 2013).   Today, in spite of

multiple historic legislative efforts to improve the educational system, in "urban schools where

most of the students are poor, two-thirds or more of the children fail to reach even the 'basic'

level of achievement on national tests" (Gehrke, 2005, p. 14) and the causes for the sustained

failure in academic performance has transcended from the socioeconomic status of the student's

family to the classroom teacher. Another proposed explanation of the underachievement crisis in

schools that has gained momentum by educational reformists within the past two decades is the

role of the school principal. In fact, researchers from the Wallace Foundation (2013) suggest,

"school and district administrators, policymakers and others declared principal leadership among

the most pressing matters on a list of issues in public school education" (p.5). Since 1922, the

Wallace Foundation works to strengthened practices and educational policies for America's

disadvantaged youth. Their research continues to explore the effects of the school site principal

position in education.

The ever-increasing responsibilities of the principal position are vast. In addition to

managing operational duties, such as budgets, schedules, student discipline, and the teacher's

union, principals are also instructional leaders who provide guidance and assistance to improve

the daily classroom instructional practices. To meet expectations of transforming schools,

principals hired to lead these institutions must find a balance of "core responsibilities." These

tasks include overseeing school operations, monitoring instruction and providing actionable feedback to the classroom teacher, establishing a school culture that includes collaborative partnerships with parents, community, and staff, and ensuring compliance with federal, state, and district policies. Principals assigned to schools with high numbers of low-income, at-risk students in large inner-city urban areas are often confronted with additional responsibilities when compared to those of non-inner-city urban school leaders. These additional obstacles faced by low-income communities may influence the leader's decision-making and actions, thereby affecting implementation of improvement strategies and ultimately, successful student achievement. Descriptions of urban poor schools continue to include "conditions of overcrowding, high turnover of faculty, limited resources, economic differences in salaries and supplies, and a great number of students at risk for academic failure" (Gehrke 2005; Guyton 1994; Quartz 2003; Tredway, 1999). Other issues prevalent in large inner-city urban minority areas are the constant political pressures for school transformation and the frequent monitoring of pervasive community concerns, such as illegal drug activity, increased incidences of gang involvement, and violence, as well as the large numbers of students with limited English language proficiency and the heightened social-emotional needs of large numbers of student and their families (Gehrke, 2005). Moreover, children from affluent homes are afforded the opportunity to enter school healthy and ready for the challenges ahead while children from communities of poverty are less likely to have received regular medical care, often resulting in developmental and cognitive problems (Ravitch, 2013). In spite of these overwhelming challenges, principals assigned to the inner-city must ensure their school achieves the same expectations as schools in the more affluent areas, in spite of their innumerable barriers including limited resources with which to serve those at-risk. To this end, "although conclusive evidence

must come from further research…it is likely that school context may also be a critical factor in determining principal's effectiveness" (Pinero, 1982, p. 162) and overall school success. Notwithstanding, for inner-city urban schools, such as those located in parts of Los Angeles, achieving school success without the appropriate leadership could be a daunting task.

In sum, the role of the principal in any educational setting requires individuals with the skills necessary to achieve maximum results by meeting the same expectations as non-urban inner-city schools. Thus, the principals assigned to underperforming inner-city urban areas are the link between a bureaucratic system and the behaviors of the students and families who live in these impoverished and underserved communities. The large numbers of students' at-risk of academic failure who are educated in poor urban schools demand a leader with the characteristics and passion to make a difference in their lives. This research will study the defining influences of the leadership practices of elementary school principals that affect successful implementation of school reform efforts in inner-city urban schools in South Los Angeles.

Background of the Study

The 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution addresses citizenship and equal protection under the law for all citizens (Library of Congress, 1866). Since the adoption of this amendment, decades of endless legal debates, particularly in the quest for racial equality, continue to surface. One such example is the historically inferior resources and opportunities in the public education system for low-income African American students. Resnick (2006) says, "Public education means a tuition-free publicly funded system that must provide an education to each child in a neighborhood school within a publicly governed school system" (p. 1). Yet, for generations, the practice of enforced racial segregation remained in all public facilities, such as

public school buildings that included a substandard system of "separate but equal" conditions for African Americans until the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Supreme Court decision in 1954. "The Brown decision annihilated the 'separate but equal' rule, previously sanctioned by the Supreme Court in 1896, that permitted states and school districts to designate some schools 'white-only' and others 'Negroes-only'" (Strauss, 2014a, p.1).

The United States witnessed numerous changes related to the civil rights of all humankind following the decision of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (United States Supreme Court, 1954). Not only were African Americans continuing to fight for equal protection under the law, but also the U.S. faced challenges with an influx of immigrant residents. This surge in the numbers of non-U.S. citizens altered the U.S. labor markets and the political landscape contributing to a growth in the number of families living in poverty (Gjelten, 2015) and in inferior conditions. In spite of the legal statutes that guaranteed equal rights, circumstances remained inadequate for minority residents as compared to non-minority residents, particularly as it related to education and family income level. A decade following the Supreme Court ruling defeating the "separate but equal" doctrine, Congress passed Public Law 88-352, more commonly known as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which "forbade discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race in hiring, promotion and firing" (National Archives and Records Administration, 1964). The Civil Rights Act also included the authorization of a study to determine the degree of inequity in the U.S. public school system (Section 402 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Seen as one of the most profound educational studies, the Coleman Report (1966), by lead author James Coleman, addressed issues of the effects of segregation in public education and the opportunity gap among black and white students. Coleman et al. (1966) determined the educational opportunities for black students were deficient and these

discrepancies grew with increasing age, and the ability to overcome the widened educational gap in performance of these student subgroups persists. Thus, in 1965, as part of his War on Poverty legislation, President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which provided federal monies to elementary and secondary schools for educationally disadvantaged students. The legislation specifically states,

> In recognition of the special educational needs of low-income families and the impact concentrations of low-income families have on the ability of local educational agencies to support adequate educational programs, the Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance…to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means (including preschool programs) which contributes to meeting the special educationally deprived children. (Section 201, Elementary and Secondary School Act, 1965)

The adoption of this bill provided the financial resources to improve education for underprivileged students in order to create a more literate citizenry and chances for a better life for those families. The ESEA legislation, also known as Title 1, continues to provide significant financial resources for disadvantaged students through compensatory programs.

It has been over 50 years since the historic judicial decision that declared, "separate educational facilities inherently unequal" and despite the adoption of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965 that mandated compensatory support for disadvantaged youth, students from many of the inner-city minority urban areas continue to receive a less than adequate public educational services resulting in a long-standing disparity in student

achievement. Over time, Congress persistently pushed regulatory educational reform legislation in the hopes of improving public education for all students. In addition to the most significant educational reform efforts, the reauthorization of the 1965 ESEA Act, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, signed into law by President George W. Bush was also authorized with the intention of equality. The purpose of NCLB was to ensure

> All children in the United States receive a high-quality education and to close the
> achievement gap that exists between children who typically perform well in school
> and those who do not many of whom are from minority racial and ethnic groups,
> have disabilities, live in poverty, or do not have English as their first language.
> (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p. 1)

The intent of the NCLB Act was to ensure equal educational opportunity for all students through accountability and choice (Ravitch, 2010). The enactment of the NCLB legislation allowed the gauge of school quality for schools receiving Title 1 funding through annual standardized test results. Schools not meeting expectations on the identified state summative assessment were labeled underperforming and subjected to increasing federal sanctions. This reauthorization included the expectation of 100 percent proficiency by the year 2014 and flexibilities of school choice for students to transfer from failing schools to non-failing schools (Ravitch, 2010).

Unfortunately, measures of student performance under the NCLB legislation had similar disparaging results to that of the previous 50 years. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the 2009 Program for International Assessment (PISA), an annual national assessment in reading and mathematics indicated 15-year old students from the U.S. performed poorly, on average than 15-year old students from other countries. In addition, the overall results

for low-income minorities were significantly below their non-minority peers. During the same year, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), another annual assessment measuring content knowledge given to U.S. students in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades indicated Black and Hispanic students made strides in improving academic performance in reading and mathematics than in previous years, however, there remained a significant gap in their achievement as compared to their white peers of the same grade level (Sawschuk, 2009). Notwithstanding, the federal accountabilities outlined in the NCLB Act directed the Local Educational Agencies (LEA) to have a laser-like focus on student achievement data led to minimum improvements in mathematics and reading data and many schools with large enrollments of low-income minority students were still unable to meet the yearly performance targets and were designated as failing.

Currently, in spite of the involvement of the federal government to reform public education, the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students lingers. In an effort to limit the role of the federal government in educational reform and to give the power of educational decision-making back to the states, President Barack Obama reauthorized the NCLB Act in August 2015. The reauthorization entitled Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) mandates states to "create their own accountability system as well as their own teacher evaluation systems, and [each state] will decide for themselves how to fix failing schools and close achievement gaps" (Camera, 2015, p. 2). This law gives states the flexibility to design their own pathways towards reform and system of support.

The historically dismal performance of public education particularly for low-income minority students despite legislative action and decades of research caused educational reformist to study the dynamics that influence student academic success. Following the Coleman Report

(1966), studies on student achievement focused on the family background and economic status. In the 1970's, studies from researcher such as Good (1979) and Graham (1979) centered on school quality and ultimately the classroom teacher as having a significant impact on student achievement (Pinero, 1982). A more recent development concentrates on the leadership of the school principal as a key-contributing factor of a successful school (Hull, 2012).

Over time, the role, responsibilities, and expectations of the school principal position have evolved and the demands on the urban school principal, specifically, continue to intensify in response to the latest reform efforts to address the complexities of inner schools serving low-income disadvantaged minority students and their corresponding substandard academic proficiency rates.

Where once the principal was expected to manage a school so that teachers could function within the context of their individual classrooms, now principals are encouraged to be leaders rather than administrators, and to work in a collaborative way with teachers, parents, students, and community to shape a common vision and to transform the very nature of the school as an educational institution. (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994, p. 1)

To meet expectations of transforming schools, especially those nestled in inner-city urban areas, principals hired to lead these institutions must successfully manage their responsibilities and the intricacies of their community that often pierce the school gates. Part of the core responsibilities of the principal has always included operational oversight. However, with the increased focus on student achievement data, frequent instructional monitoring and providing assistance and guidance to the classroom teacher have become essential functions. Furthermore, it is also important for principals to create a school culture that reflects an understanding of the community issues, maintain collaborative partnerships with parents, community, and staff, as

well as to establish procedures that ensure compliance and accountabilities for federal, state, and district policies with the overarching goal of increasing annual student achievement (National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), 2013).

This research study will explore the phenomena that exist in an inner-city urban school community that affect the implementation of reform efforts by the elementary principal. The study will investigate factors such as quality and characteristics of a school principal, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, the urban school community, and school district policies and political influences to gain a perspective of principal effectiveness and the impact on student achievement. It will be guided by two qualitative case research projects: Forces Affecting the Principal's Role in an Inner-City Setting by Pinero (1982) and Principals in an Urban Bureaucracy: The First Years by Osterman and Sullivan (1994), Collectively, their research illustrated how internal and external stimuli influence principal's actions that influence school outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Research tells us that the U.S. educational system is inundated by a continuous achievement gap in reading and mathematics among Kindergarten through 12th-grade students from different socioeconomic status, ethnic backgrounds, and communities. While much is known about the implications of standard-based curriculum, assessment, and accountability on student achievement, more recent research on educational reform efforts focuses on the impact of the position of the school-based principal on successful schooling. More importantly, the need to examine the internal and external impacts of the school principal assigned to lead schools in large densely populated low-income urban inner-city elementary schools may provide key

information required to support closing the long-standing achievement gap between student

subgroups.

There continues to be a knowledge gap in the educational research that explicitly reports

the effects of leadership on student achievement as perceived by the classroom teacher. This

information is even more limited for teachers employed in urban inner-city elementary schools.

To better support, low-income inner-city-urban elementary schools, specifically those located in

South Los Angeles in becoming thriving educational institutions of learning, a mixed-method

study is needed to explore the factors that affect reform efforts in these most challenging schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to examine the dynamics such as

characteristics and qualities, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, urban school

community and culture, and political influences of inner-city elementary principals at two school

sites that may influence successful implementation of reform efforts in South Los Angeles. At

this stage in the research, the leadership practices of these urban inner-city leaders will be

defined as practices utilized by the school principal that increase opportunities for student's

academic success.

Researcher's Background

The researcher has 24 years of certificated experience in both Elementary and Secondary

with the Los Angeles Unified School District, 18 years of which were school site administrative

assignments with direct instructional and operational oversight at the elementary level.

Specifically, seven years as a school site Principal, five years as an Assistant Principal and seven

years as an Elementary School Director in the South Los Angeles area. As Principal, she

developed and implemented systems of high expectations, a culture of collaboration, monitored

for the utilization of differentiated standards-based instruction coupled with frequent progress monitoring and data analysis with all stakeholders, along with a myriad of opportunities for parents and community to be daily equal partners. Through her vision, the school received a 2010 California Distinguished School Award, a 2011 Title 1 Achieving School Award, and a 2011 California Honor Roll School Award. "Knowing and Preparing Every Student to be College Ready" led to the following accomplishments: school-wide increase in proficient and advanced percent on the California Standards Test (CST) from 2005 to 2011 of 39% in ELA and 41% increase in Mathematics. The API score improved from 608 in 2005 to 828 in 2011, surpassing the State benchmark of 800 in 2010. The number of English Learners scoring basic or above on the CST in ELA in 2011 was 80%. She received her*: Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from UC San Diego and her Master of Administration in Education from California State University, Dominguez Hills.

For the past seven years, she has focused on building principal leadership capacities for early educational centers, elementary, and middle schools. She supports school site leaders in the following areas: Goal Setting; Problem Solving through Data Analysis; Collaborative Planning & Monitoring; Instructional Classroom Observations aligned with providing Actionable Feedback; and Designing and Supporting the Implementation of small group differentiated instruction during Universal Access Time. Working principals in the inner city have led to research and document issues within the urban community that may hinder reform efforts. This study will offer insights for schools and school districts to improve the education for the underserved inner-city minority students.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to determine if there is a significant relationship between principal practices given the existing key factors and the successful implementation of reform in low-income urban inner-city elementary schools in South Los Angeles. To this end, the following research questions were developed in accordance with the purpose of the study and the statement of the research problem.

1. What effect do principal leadership practices, based on the principal's leadership style as measured on the MLQ-5X, and instructional leadership practices, as measured by the PIMRS, have on academic school success?

    a. What are the principal's perceptions of their leadership style behavior scores as measured on the MLQ-5X and instructional leadership behavior scores as measured on the PIMRS?

    b. What are the teacher's perceptions of their principal's leadership style behavior scores as measured on the MLQ-5X and instructional leadership behavior scores as measured on the PIMRS?

    c. Does the principal's perception of their leadership style behavior scores as measured on the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership behavior scores as measured on the PIMRS align with the teacher's perspective?

2. How do principals utilize the key factors "characteristics and qualities of an effective school leader," "leadership style and behavior," "instructional leadership," "inner-city urban community," and "political influences" to improve school effectiveness in the urban inner-city elementary school?

a. What are the principal's perceptions of the key factors and their importance to successfully implementing reform strategies?

b. What are the teacher's perceptions of the impact of the key factors on improving school-wide achievement leadership practices?

c. How do the principal's leadership practices align with the key areas?

Theoretical Framework

A combination of Fullan and Quinn's The Coherence Framework (2015) and Childress, Elmore, Grossman, & King's Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Coherence Framework (2011) have guided this work. This study was based on the idea that achieving schools have effective principals that influence the instructional and operational programs and the idea that schools serving large, lower socioeconomic, minority populations can reach higher academic proficiency with excellent leadership. The foundation of this examination rest on the understanding of the many theories specified within the literature on effective leadership. Some dated as far back as 40 years, while others were more recent. One theoretical framework referenced throughout the more recent articles is Fullan and Quinn's work on change leadership through "systemness". Fullan and Quinn created an important roadmap, the Coherence framework about direction, working together, deepening learning, and securing accountability to bring about change in our educational institutions. Merriam-Webster defines Coherence as the "integration of diverse elements, relationships, or values". According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), "there is only one way to achieve greater coherence, and that is through purposeful action and interaction, working on capacity, clarity, the precision of practice, transparency, monitoring of progress, and continuous correction" (p.2). These elements form the basis for whole system reform.
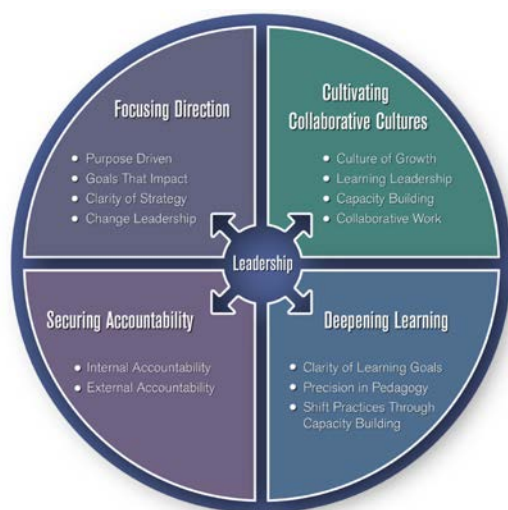
Figure 1. Coherence framework. Reprinted from *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, District, and Systems*, by M. Fullan and J. Quinn, 2016, p. 12. Copyright 2016 by SAGE Company. Reprinted with permission.

The Coherence framework guides school site actions. It provides guidance for any leader who understands how the main components work together (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The first element, focusing direction speaks to the requirement of the leader to construct a shared moral purpose and a plan for achievement. Another element, cultivating collaborative cultures, references using the "… group to change the group by building deep collaborative work horizontally and vertically across their organizations" (p. 47). A third element, deepening learning, says "… we must abandon the notion that there is a silver bullet, package, or program… and recognize that the next shift in learning will require knowledge building by everyone engaged and must affect all students" (p. 79). The final element is securing accountability. Fullan references "investments in internal accountability must logically precede … any expectation that schools will respond productively to external pressure for performance" (as cited in Elmore, 2004).   The core of this framework is leadership by the site principal with

all stakeholders working together to pursue the four components of the framework through a coherent systems approach.

Additionally, another leadership theory central to this research study is that of Public Education Leadership Project at Harvard University (PELP) Coherence Framework by Childress, et al (2011).

> In order to accomplish these goals in all schools, not just some schools, the organizational elements of a district – its culture, structure and systems, resources, stakeholders and environment – must be managed in a way that is coherent with explicit strategy to improve teaching and learning in every classroom (Childress, et. al, 2011, p.1).

While the purpose of the framework resembles that of Fullan and Quinn's Coherence Framework, what differentiates Elmore, et al Coherence Framework is the consideration of culture, environment, and resources. The framework has five organizational elements: culture, environment, resources, structure and systems, and stakeholders and the effectiveness of each is linked to the actions by district leadership for every school. The outside of the framework represents the environment that includes regulations and statutes, contracts, funding, and politics (Childress, et. al, 2011). These elements are external to district control. The heart of the framework is the instructional core. The instructional core is the strategy for improvement grounded in the work of the three components, teacher's knowledge, student engagement, and challenging curriculum.
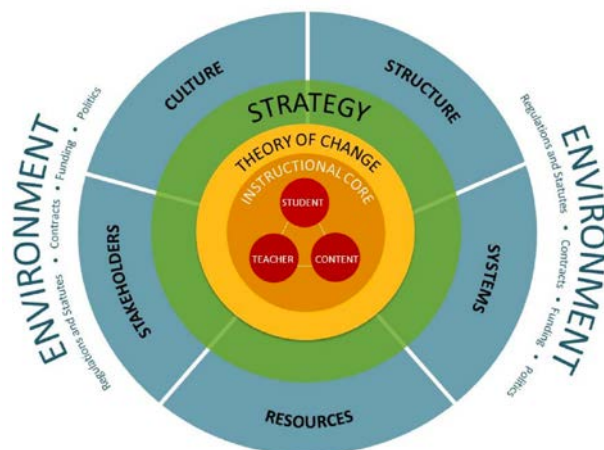
Figure 2. PELP Framework. Reprinted from *Notes from the Coherence Framework*,
Harvard University, 2011, Retrieved November 29, 2015, from http://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/files/hbs-test/files/pel010p2.pdf. Copyright 2007 by Joseph President and Fellows of Harvard College. Reprinted with permission.

In sum, the goal of academic excellence "is no longer lofty or optional given today's heightened accountability environment; it is simply the job public school districts are expected to perform" (p. 14). The integration of both Coherence Frameworks will guide the work of the researcher to understanding the plight of academic excellence for low-income inner-city elementary schools in South Los Angeles.

Significance of the Study

The disparity in student achievement between students of wealthy and lower socioeconomic minority communities continues to widen as the U.S. reckons with years of failures in public education reform efforts. History indicates before the early 1970's, minority students were predominately educated in separate facilities with funding significantly lower than the wealthy districts (Mujic, 2015). "But funding alone is not enough to equalize access to a quality education" (p. 2). For, "urban schools that enroll high proportions of poor students, performance [has been] appallingly low" (Ravitch, 1998, p. 1). Moreover, many of these schools

located in large inner-city communities confront additional daily issues of gang violence, substance abuse, minimal access to proper health care facilities, insufficient textbooks and instructional materials, inadequate school facilities, lack of well-qualified personnel, and conditions of overcrowding.

"As the growth of urban school systems parallels the growth of urban America, …the need for reexamination of the structure of the urban school system has become critical…" (Candoli, 1976, p. 244). According to Mujic (2015), "schools need new and innovative approaches to turn resources into student results that beget success in the world beyond the classroom" (p. 2). Thus, improving the educational opportunities for these students would not only improve their academic success, it would also minimize the achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students. More importantly, it would enhance the chance for a better life and strengthen our society. Unfortunately, after decades of failed attempts to school reform, what is working and what is not working continues to be an enigma, particularly in large low-income urban inner-city communities.

More recently, "efforts to improve the quality of education at the school level have focused on the … need to improve the quality of the principal performance" (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994, p. 3). As school systems are raising the academic standards and expectations for what students should learn, today's principals confront multiple challenges to manage the operations of a school while simultaneously exercising instructional leadership that would greatly improve the instructional practices towards increasing achievement.

Historical studies on the emerging role of the principal, suggests that the leadership style the principal adopts influences school achievement outcomes (Osterman and Sullivan, 1994). Research initiated by Brookover and Lezotte (1977) and Edmonds (1979) identified a cluster of

behaviors common to effective principals. These behaviors are similar to additional research nearly 20 years later by Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1990) indicating successful principals maintain high levels of commitment to school goals, create a school vision, and establish high standards for meeting school-wide goals. Subsequently, Harvey and Holland (2011) suggest successful principals perform five key behaviors shaping a vision of academic success, creating a climate hospital to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. "Today, improving school leadership ranks high on the list of priorities for school reform" (Harvey & Holland, 2011, p. 5). In addition to exerting instructional influence, the principal's role "… has become highly political and each principal must [also] balance the demands of the community, state and federal government, the school board, staff and teacher's union" (Bughee, 2006, p. 23). While further research will provide additional information, the question remains, what effect does the principal's ability to balance these key behaviors have on effective schooling and student success.

This research study provides a holistic insight into the difficulty and complexity faced by inner-city urban public schools in the 21st century that hinders their engagement in successful reform efforts. Perhaps the most pressing need is the capacity to respond to a diverse student population. Students come to the urban school from all socioeconomic levels; they may be indigenous to the city or may be newly arrived and not fluent in English; they may be part of a cohesive family unit or completely separated from parents. Their needs are different and the urban school system must provide an educational program for all of its diverse clientele (Candoli, 1976).

Currently, the major issues facing urban education remains how to successfully educate the influx of diverse low-income minority students who live in poverty. Little research exists that explores relationships among external and internal school dynamics with principal practices in low-income minority urban elementary schools. This study contributes to the understanding of those forces that hinder successful implementation of systemic reform efforts within the elementary schools in urban inner-city areas of South Los Angeles.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in this section to provide understanding for this research study:

Achievement Gap: occurs when one subgroup of students (i.e. by race or ethnicity) outperforms another group and the results are statistically significant (National Association of Educational Progress, 2015).

Brown versus Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas (1954): a Supreme Court ruling that prohibited states from segregation in public schools based on race (Strauss, 2014).

California Department of Education (CDE): is the governmental agency responsible for managing the public education in California.

California Standards Test (CST): a measure of the achievement of California content standards in English-language arts, mathematics, science, and history-social science for students in grades 2 – 11 (Ed-Data, 2015).

Collective Bargaining Agreement: a workplace agreement between an employer and employee's union. It outlines working conditions on such items as salary, health benefits, and other workplace issues (Cornell School of Law, n.d.).

Community: a group or groups who either seeks to impose a particular set of values on everyone or who maintain common values (Peshkin, 1978).

Culture: all human conduct culturally mediated and culture is pervasive, representing a social system of accumulated beliefs, attitudes, beliefs, and values that are responses to specific circumstances (Howard, 2010, p.52).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS): an assessment to measure the acquisition of early literacy skills.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965: a federal statute, which authorizes funding for K-12 education signed by President Johnson. Aimed at providing improved resources at schools with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, it ushered in accountability for schools to increase equality across the United States. (Education Laws, 2015).

Elementary School: schools with grades Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten through grades 5 or 6.

Equity: a simple sense of fairness in the distribution of the primary goods and services that characterize our social order (Edmond, 1979, p. 15).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This legislation signed by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015, to ensure equal opportunity for all students (U.S. Department of Education).

Full-Range Leadership Theory (FRLT): developed by Bernard M. Bass categorized leadership style into three categories: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Instructional Leadership: refers to administrators influence to improve student achievement focusing on the quality of the instructional delivery (Harvey and Holland, 2011).

Laissez-faire Leadership: refers to a style of leadership where the leader shows

reluctance or lack of leadership; avoidance management (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Leadership Behavior: what leaders do, their actions when they are in a leadership role (Strauss, 2014).

Leadership Style: the manner and approach to providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. As seen by the employees, it includes the total pattern of explicit and implicit influences of their leader (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Local Educational Agency (LEA): a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a serve function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP): a nationally recognized assessment to indicate what students known and can do in specific academic areas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

No Child Left Behind Act (Public Law 107-110) of 2001: a bipartisan agreement to reform American education that promised high content standards, testing and accountability (Ravitch, 2010).

Poverty: a series of circumstances and challenges defined as poor health, inadequate housing, high crime rates, single-parent families, and substance abuse (Ravitch, 1998).

Principal: a term used interchangeably with *School Principal* or *administrator* is the person in charge of a public school (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Program for International Assessment (PISA): an international assessment given every three years that measures 15-year old students in Reading, Mathematics, and Science (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

School Culture: a set of norms, values and practices, and beliefs that shape behavior and relations at a school. It is an unwritten expectation that accumulates over time and becomes a part of a way of being (Martin, 2009).

School Reform: the continuous effort to improve the educational opportunities of every student in the school system. School improvement will not result over-night, the implementation should be sustained over time (Strauss, 2014).

Separate but Equal Doctrine: a1896 Supreme Court decision that permitted states and school districts to designate public facilities by race (Strauss, 2014).

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC): a public agency that offers a complete assessment system for grades 3 – 8 and high school in English Language Arts and Mathematics. It includes an annual summative assessment aligned with the Common Core State Standards (Ed-Data, 2015).

Transactional Leadership: occurs when the leader is the dominant influence and the employees are followers. This style often is unsuccessful at motivating others to sustained improvements (Bass, 1990).

Transformational Leadership: occurs when all employees have a shared responsibility and collectively work towards improvements. The leader is no longer the sole influence (Bass, 1990).

Urban Schools: operate in densely populated areas serving significantly more students. They are frequently marked by higher concentrations of poverty, greater racial and ethnic diversity, larger concentrations of immigrant populations and linguistic diversity, and have more frequent rates of student mobility (Ahram & Stembridge, 2016).

War on Poverty policy: legislation proposed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 to offer federal funding to reduce the growing poverty rate (Thomas and Brady, 2005).

Limitations of the Study

The quality of the principal's leadership preparation and the available support at the local and district levels for the school principal could result to a lack of understanding needed for leading inner-city schools, and hence variations in their responses. Also, the researcher's presence, as the researcher is the current administrative district level supervisor, during the interview process can affect the responses of the participants and the findings of the study may not indicate a cause and effect relationship.

Delimitations of the Study

This study confines itself to elementary schools within the South Los Angeles area to gain a better understanding of factors that sway elementary principals from successfully implementing reform strategies targeted to increase student achievement. To identify aspects of the inner-city area, the researcher only sought perspectives from school site administrators and their teachers from the South Los Angeles boundaries. Another delimitation used by the researcher was the exclusion of student input.

Assumptions

It is assumed that all participants in the study were volunteers. Also, the criteria for participant selection were appropriate and all were viable candidates for this study. Participants were randomly selected and are able to accurately and honestly respond to the survey questions without bias. Also, it is assumed that the survey instruments used in the study were appropriate measures. The principal leaders are able to understand and describe school, community, and or

district factors that influence their decision-making. Finally, there was the possibility of negative bias from both principal and teachers.

<div align="center">**Organization of the Study**</div>

This research study will comprise five chapters. Chapter one provides the foundation for the study by presenting the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, listing any definition of terms, offering a theoretical framework, as well as detailing relevant research question.

Chapter two summarizes the relevant review of the research literature on the five core areas: (a) Aspects of Leadership and Behavior, (b) the Urban School Community, (c) Political Influences, (d) School Culture, and (e) The Role of the Principal in an Urban Setting. In this chapter, the research will offer a historical perspective of urban elementary schools in Los Angeles County and present a broad context of discussing influences that have led to their existence.

Chapter three addresses a detailed description of the researcher's plan that includes an analysis of techniques used in this study and the steps utilized in data collection. It delineates the interviews, surveys, and observations conducted by the researcher to gather data about historical and current conditions principals face in the southern area Los Angeles urban elementary schools.

Chapters four and five respectively will offer a concise yet comprehensive presentation of the researcher's results. Specifically, Chapter Four will present an objective analysis of the research.

Lastly, chapter five will provide the summary, discussions, implications and recommendations of the research.

Summary

The importance of effective school leadership cannot be undervalued (Waters & Marzano, 2006). As school systems are increasing the expectations for what student should learn and be able to do, today's principals have a key responsibility to not only manage the operations of a school but they are now held accountable for demonstrating instructional leadership and improving the overall academic performance on annual standardized assessments. They must also maintain compliance with district policies and governmental accountabilities as well as to create an environment that would ultimately lead to becoming an effective school. Thus, effective school principals are key to improving schools and raising student achievement (Shelton & Welu, 2014).

Educators are continuously exploring new ways to improve teaching and learning, particularly principals who lead schools in low-income urban inner-city neighborhoods that serve high need students from repressed impoverished communities. These leaders must rethink their services, academic programs, organizational structure, and teaching methods to create a safe, positive, and culturally inclusive environment that supports successful learning. In recent years, the criteria for identifying successful schools include student achievement data from annual standardized testing. However, for low-income inner-city school principals, implementing systemic reform strategies that would increase the overall school academic performance and bridge the prolonged student achievement gap that exists between these schools and schools where students tend to reach the overall proficiency targets remain a continuous challenge. Thus, understanding the influences of school leadership on student achievement at the consistently underperforming inner-city schools remains a high priority for educational reformist. Moreover, with the persistent increase in the number of families who live in poverty

throughout the U.S., it is equally important to understand the intricacies of educating students of these divested neighborhoods to reform and eliminate the trend of academic underperformance.

A qualitative and quantitative study is needed to investigate the role of today's inner-city urban school principal by examining the internal and external school dynamics that hinder the successful implementation of systemic reform strategies in the elementary school settings in South Los Angeles. It is imperative that educators understand the multiple issues that exist in current day inner-city communities that affect school reform efforts to better support these schools in becoming thriving educational organizations for future generations of students.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Public schools in the United States are often afflicted by internal and external forces, which may result in a profound impact on student academic achievement and overall school success. Educational researchers and reformists have studied some of the dynamics that may influence school effectiveness for decades. The early 1960s marked a rise in community activism with respect to race relations throughout the United States, and the matter of equality of educational opportunities for the students living in poverty was of governmental concern. Commissioned by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Coleman Report is one of the most important educational studies of the 20th century. Coleman, a Sociologist from John Hopkins University, compiled a report focused on the social aspects of schooling and determined that disadvantaged students are more successful academically when educated in an integrated classroom. He also identified that academic achievement is correlated to family background (Kiviat, 2000). This report was the impetus for numerous additional studies on school improvement that focused on the family background and socioeconomic status as determinants of scholastic success. Overall, students from families with higher socioeconomic resources were often more successful in school than students from lower socioeconomic resources.

The following decade educational studies centered on school quality with the emphasis on the classroom teacher as having a significant effect on students' ability to learn, and not necessarily the economic status of the family. Unfortunately, the deficit in achievement results in public schools continued to result in growing concerns and disparities among student subgroups. Many felt the achievement in "the United States is standing still while more focused nations [are] moving rapidly ahead" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 9). In 1983, a report issued by the National

Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* apprised the American people on the quality of the education in the United States. The report "decried a rising tide of mediocrity in education and called for sweeping reforms" (p. 9). It gave rise to speculation of other possible contributors to the academic challenges in the public education system.

With the increase in political pressures to better compete, both in the United States and internationally, a new trend has emerged over the last 30 years that specifically concentrates on the impact of the school principal as a determinant of a successful school. "Nearly 60 % of a student's performance is attributed to the teacher and principal effectiveness, with principals accounting for about a quarter of a school's total impact on a student's academic success" (Shelton & Welu, 2014, p. 1). Thus, the success of any school organization is due in part to the daily management, skills, and behaviors of the leader. According to Dantly (2010),

> the field of educational leadership has been critiqued through feminist, postmodern, critical, and critical race theoretical positions. Each of these perspectives is indicative of a change in how school leadership is conceptualized and practiced resulting in a profound effect on school success. (p. 214)

Yet, little is known about the impact of the principal position in neglected urban inner-city schools.

In today's era of federal accountability for schools, after the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2000, the principal remains the central source of leadership and influence on school achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Unfortunately, "the tension between what is happening in schools and what is demanded of schools by the outside world is increasing" (Roberson, 2011, p. 886). In the Center for Public Education's "Principal Perspective" report,

Hull (2012) suggested that now, more than ever, "principals … are focused on student achievement while still retaining their traditional administrative and building manager duties" (p.1). Nonetheless, in addition to the traditional managerial responsibilities faced by the school principal, such as teacher quality, student safety, hiring practices, and shaping the culture of the school, principals also have to be vigilant with the many external challenges of navigating federal and district policies and targets, building relationships with parents and community members, and infusing the ever-changing technological advancements into their school structures (McBride, 2008). Maintaining a balance of these demands can be an overwhelming task, especially for the modern-day inner-city urban school leader. Many of these inner-city principals must also be more responsive to the relentless public scrutiny and labels of failure. In addition, they must develop and utilize a knowledge base of the various complexities unique to their school's neighborhood, which is often afflicted with the ills of poverty, to equate with non-inner-city schools. According to Gehrke (2005), an understanding of such concerns as "the effects of poverty on learning, awareness of resources available in the school and community, and acknowledgment of the additional bureaucracy in large urban schools" (p. 16) is needed for schools located in the heart of the inner city to achieve success.

By any measure, academic achievement in urban inner-city schools is lower than schools located in non-urban inner-city areas, and the need to improve the quality of education for these minority children is critical. According to Ravitch (1998), "urban schools enroll 24 percent of all public school students in the U.S., 35 percent of poor students, and 43 percent of minority students" (p. 1). In comparison, "by 2022, it is projected that minorities will constitute 54.7 percent of public school student population and white 45.3 percent" (Strauss, 2014c, para. 2). Hence, this study is predicated on the concern that the exponential growth in the population of

minority students in public education correlates to the growing achievement gap among minority

and non-minority students in public schools. In order to address this academic gap, it is

imperative to understand the impact of the principal's decisions and actions needed to create

effective inner-city urban educational institutions if the discrepancy in achievement between

inner-city minority and non-minority schools is ever to be eliminated. Thus, this study

considered the union of multiple factors that may affect successful student achievement, with a

focus on low-income urban inner-city areas in South Los Angeles. It examined five critical areas,

identified over the last 50 years, that researchers have found to influence academic achievement.

These areas include: (a) principal effectiveness, (b) the expectations to lead efforts of stakeholder

collaboration and shared decision-making, (c) the focus on teacher development, (d) the effects

of poverty, and (e) the ability to balance policy and mandates.

Themes from the Literature

Five themes emerged from the literature:

1. Characteristics and Qualities of Urban School Leaders

2. Leadership Style and Behaviors

3. Instructional Leadership

4. The Urban School Community and Culture

5. Political Influence

Characteristics and Qualities of Urban School Leaders

While teachers have the greatest potential to impact student achievement, the effect of the

contributions of a strong principal leader is the latest reform effort towards attaining elevated

student performance. Thus, principals are second only to teachers in their influence on student

achievement (Seashore-Louis, et al, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). It is the

responsibility of the school principal to shape and maintain the culture of learning by creating the systems necessary to influence teaching and learning and drive student achievement that leads to effective schools. Discussions about factors that contribute to effective leadership are often reported as a laundry list of principal "to-do" items without consideration to student achievement. However, recent studies have examined the relationship between principals and student outcomes and have identified concrete characteristics and qualifications needed to be an influential principal (Hull, 2012). A primary study by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) analyzed nearly 35 years of literature on school leadership components that could have a positive correlation with student achievement. The results of the study identified 11 critical factors for implementation by the principal leader and their school community to enhance student achievement in their school: (a) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (b) challenging goals and effective feedback, (c) parent and community involvement, (d) safe and orderly environment, (e) collegiality and professionalism, (f) instructional strategies, (g) classroom management, (h) classroom curriculum design, (i) home environment, (j) learned intelligence/background knowledge, and (k) motivation. Thus, in schools where the principal engaged these factors, there was a statistically significant relationship with student achievement.

An effective school leader is one who models expected behavior, is well respected, is seen as a problem solver who can make difficult decisions, is an exceptional listener, a visionary, and ultimately holds others accountable (Meador, 2014). "Research strongly suggests they are the key ingredient to improving a school's performance, especially low-achieving schools and those schools serving traditionally disadvantaged student" (Hull, 2012, p. 2). "The Principal Perspective" outlines targeted areas of up-to-date leadership actions and responsibilities that are linked to successful student achievement that must be considered. The initial area addresses the

evolution of the role and responsibilities of the principal. The current infiltration of technology in society has resulted in a new era of data and accountability, specifically in our educational institutions as it relates to content knowledge acquisition. More than ever, the principal must possess the skills of an instructional leader. That is, the principal must be skillful in understanding what actions to take to foster increased academic learning. According to Hull (2012), today's principals have the charge of closely monitoring student academic progress against grade level standards as measured by summative and formative assessments scores and they are expected to rally all stakeholders to assist in reaching their goals. Others indicate, "there is a greater focus on more collaborative leadership, more demands for community involvement, and a greater need for data-driven decision making and the use of technology" (McBride, 2008, p. 22).

Next, the report takes a deeper look into the role of the principal in challenging urban elementary schools that are often challenged by other student outcomes such as chronic absenteeism, suspension, and lower graduation rates often with very limited resources. While it is understood that principals cannot do this work alone, Hull (2012) mentions, that "research strongly suggest they [principals] are the key ingredient to improving a school's performance, especially at low-achieving schools and those schools serving traditionally disadvantaged students" (p.2). In fact, "principals in the low achieving or high poverty minority schools tend to have a greater impact on student outcomes than principals at less challenging schools" (Hull, 2012; Leithwood, et al., 2004; Louis-Seashore, et al. 2010). Researchers found in such schools led by an effective principal, the student absence rate is minimal and an increase graduation rates more than in schools with an ineffective principal (Hull, 2012). In general, effective principals tend to be educational "visionaries; instructional and curriculum leaders; assessment experts;

public relations expert; budget analyst; facility managers; special program administrators; and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiative" (NAESP, 2013, p. 2).

The third area of effective leadership qualities studied in modern-day relates to the principal's experience. Mainly, where there is a newly assigned inexperienced principal at low-performing schools there is often a decline in student achievement (Hull, 2012). Likewise, as with teachers, principal turnovers adversely impact schools. Principals become more successful with additional years of experience resulting in a positive effect on student achievement. According to Louis-Seashore, et al (2010), it takes approximately five years to put a teaching staff in place as well as fully implement policies and practices that will positively impact school performance. From this perspective, increasing years of leadership experience would result in increasing school effectiveness. Finally, being an instructional leader is another hallmark of an effective principal. We know that teachers are on the front line of learning, but good leadership has the potential to unleash latent capabilities that may exist within an organization. "Effective instructional leadership combines an understanding of the instructional needs of the school with an ability to target resources where they are needed, hire the best available teachers, provide teachers with the opportunities they need to improve and keep the school running smoothly" (Grissom & Loeb, 2009, p. 32).

Leadership Style and Behavior

Leadership is a vital element in the improvement process of any thriving organization, and it involves influence and inspiring all stakeholders. Essentially, it is a necessary skill for the leader to persuade members of a group in activities towards achieving a goal. "School leadership is increasingly seen as an essential component of school improvement" (Supovitz, 2014, p.19). Successful school leaders can create a shared vision and build a sense of commitment among

staff, students, and parents (Peterson, 2002; Martin, 2009; Wallace Foundation, 2013). In a school, a principal's leadership style is an indication of their beliefs observable in the overall culture they establish. Goldman (1998) indicates, "leadership style is determined by deep-seated values and beliefs about how people learn" (p. 21).

The role of the principal has shifted from that of a manager to principals having a more integrated approach to leadership. From this perspective, the principal must recognize the strengths of their employees and build collaborative capacity to better meet goals and expectations. Three leadership styles principals use to guide their schools: transactional, transformational and laissez-faire. The transactional leadership style is sometimes referred to as bartering where services are exchanged for rewards…. and the principal is still the dominant leader and the teachers are the followers" (Martin, 2009). A transactional leader focuses on ensuring compliance with the organizational goals and closely monitors for job completion. Transactional leaders work within the existing organizational culture and rarely look for new ideas from others. These leaders tend to lead from a prescriptive point of view. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, uses a more collaborative model where the leader builds capacity and empowers the staff to work collectively towards accomplishing goals (Taylor & La Cava, 2011). They often work to enhance and motivate staff to work towards cohesiveness and to reach a shared vision. Transformational leaders work towards achieving positive results from their employees and to motivate them to remain vested in the work. They have an awareness of self to understand how this self-awareness affects their actions and the actions of others. They base their actions on what is good for all. They "…lead with integrity and authenticity that resonates with others and inspires them to follow" (Cox, 2007, p. 10). Finally, the third and final style of leadership explained in Bass's model (1985) is Laissez-faire.

Principals who use this type of leadership often practice avoidance and are unavailable when needed (Martin, 2009). Using this approach, employees have autonomy to complete their task, as they deem necessary. The leader may provide support and resources if necessary.

The principal's actions and style of leadership impacts school operations and ultimately affects student achievement. School leaders have the potential to motivate and inspire staff within an organization. Recent research has begun to identify patterns of behaviors that may indicate school effectiveness. Principal practice is a direct consequence of their belief, values, and intentions and understanding they bring to the role (Leithwood, 1993). According to Leithwood, the principal's education, experience, personal background, and the environmental factors influence the principal behaviors. Harvey and Holland (2013) suggest five key behaviors effective principals demonstrate: (a) shaping a vision of academic success; (b) creating a climate hospital to education; (c) cultivating leadership in others; (d) Improving instruction; and (e) managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement (p. 5). Hence, the success of any school organization is due in part to the characteristics and qualities, actions and influence, behaviors, and the leadership style of the principal on the school community.

Instructional Leadership

Since the 1980's, the U.S. has been on the path of educational transformation through standards-based and accountability with states having the freedom to develop individual state standards aligned to assessment for validation of student learning. "During this time, former President Bill Clinton's administration established a Goals 2000 program where states were given money to write their own academic standards, assessments and devise individual criteria for measuring student achievement" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 19). However, more than 30 years later, the 2013 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures Reading,

Mathematics, and Science literacy reports the U.S. ranks 37th in Mathematics and 25th in Reading as compared to other countries (OECD, 2016). Overall, the U.S. ranked significantly below other countries in academic achievement. Years of research aimed at identifying strategies that would reform our educational system have been through the lens of the classroom teacher. Over the last several decades, however, efforts to improve the quality of education at schools have centered on the role of the school principal (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994).

Successful instructional school leaders realize the importance of creating, communicating, implementing and monitoring a school vision that includes high expectations and is focused on teaching and learning. Today, in this period of standards-based and accountability, the principal's responsibilities include an in-depth involvement in the process of classroom instruction. Specifically, principals review data for decision-making and planning, developing and monitoring of the delivery of curriculum content, as well as providing meaningful yet focused professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. They must also be cognizant of appropriate researched-based instructional strategies that will increase student achievement while managing the oversight of traditional operational responsibilities. Thus, it is incumbent upon the school principal to "…become intimately familiar with the "technical core" of school-what is required to improve the quality of teaching and learning" (Harvey, et. al, 2013, p. 11).

Instructional leadership is any action implemented by the principal to improve student achievement. It is a critical component of the principal's day. Instructional leadership is the work to ensure that every student experiences the highest level of instruction daily and the principal is ultimately responsible for implementing strategies that would result in increased learning. These include having a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom

practices that contribute to student achievement, knowing how to work with faculty/staff to implement continuous student improvement, and knowing how to provide the necessary support for faculty/staff to carry out a research-based curriculum and instructional practices. (Grigsby, Schumacher, Decman and Simieou, 2010, p. 2)

Hence, principals must be prepared to dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort to the mechanical details of daily classroom instructional delivery and concentrate on activities that directly impact instruction. The Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington, describes four salient dimensions of instructional leadership as (a) Vision, Mission and Learning-focused Culture, (b) Improvement of Instructional Practices, (c) Allocation of Resources, and (d) Management of Systems and Processes (Center of Educational Leadership, 2015). These dimensions provide an overarching focused understanding needed to guide school principals toward successful leadership approaches. Effective leadership practices include but are not limited to analyzing data to determine strength and weaknesses with staff, collaborating and researching the best strategies for improved student achievement, conducting frequent classroom visits and providing immediate constructive feedback, and providing relevant professional development that is data driven (Grigsby et al., 2010). A great instructional leader can take risks and make difficult decisions. An example of a making a difficult decision is the release of staff members who continuously do not demonstrate the capacity to grow. Recent research conducted by the Wallace Foundation organization determined that "…most school variables, considered separately, have a small effect on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass" (Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 4).

The Inner-City Urban School Community

"Past research has found exposure to violence to be associated with negative cognitive, behavioral, and mental outcomes at the individual student level" (Pelletier, 2014, p. 1). On the other hand, further research is needed to investigate how this exposure affects the principal's decision-making in implementing school-wide processes aimed at increasing student achievement. Given the amount of violence on school campuses in recent years, one would surmise that such exposure would impact teaching and learning, particularly in the communities where there are multiple exposures and minimal availability of healthcare treatment. Unfortunately, students from inner-city urban communities are subject to contact of violent events on a daily basis. In fact, it is a way of life for many urban residents who live in the inner-city. In some South Los Angeles neighborhoods, students witness prostitution, gang activities, and illegal drug distribution and use frequently. Exposure to these and other types of violent unwanted activities could negatively influence students of these communities and have a great impact on students acquiring the skills needed to capitalize on education and becoming productive citizens.

Urban schools are typically characterized by densely populated areas and serve more children than non-urban schools. "For many Americans, the term urban school evokes an image of a dilapidated school building in a poor inner-city neighborhood populated with African American or Hispanic children" (Jacob, 2007, p. 130). While this may describe some schools in South Los Angeles, a great majority of schools have received funding to upgrade the school facilities. Regardless to the physical school building, schools represent a haven where students can acquire knowledge, interact with their peers, and receive two meals per day in a comfortable setting that may be different from their home environment. Sadly, many of these low-income

inner-city students from these communities enter school with dire needs. Jacob (2007) indicates these communities are often characterized by minimal support from the home, increased mobility rates, minimal access to healthcare and community resources, poverty, and incalculable crime rates. According to Ravitch (1998), many students from urban communities are unable to graduate from high school in the usual four years, and those who graduate are ill prepared for a college education. Unfortunately, inner-city urban schools and their communities are plagued with a multitude of concerns and schools are continuously faced with how to ensure the students meet the minimal state and district grade level measures of achievement.

By any measure, the academic achievement in urban schools is lower than schools located in non-urban schools. According to Ravitch, "urban schools enroll 24% of all public school students in the United States, 35% of poor students, and 43% of minority students" (Ravitch, 1998, p. 1). Historically, the U.S. educational system is afflicted by a continuous achievement gap between Kindergarten through 12th-grade students from different socioeconomic, ethnic backgrounds, and communities. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), students educated in high poverty areas traditionally score lower than students attending wealthier area schools. "… 63% of 4th-grade students in non-urban schools across the nation reached the basic level in reading compared to 43% in urban schools" (Ravitch, 1998, p. 130). More recent statistics indicate' students in South Los Angeles continue to underperform and thus, the challenge of educating minority students attending inner-city public K – 12 schools in Los Angeles continues to persist.

Home for more than one million people, South Los Angeles is historically known for the continuous plight and challenges of multiple repressed neighborhoods (Park, Watson, & Watson, 2008). According to the Los Angeles Times website, South Los Angeles is comprised

of 28 neighborhood communities totaling approximately 51 square miles resting in a region

between the 10 and 105 freeways, to as far west as the 405 freeway and east to Alameda

Boulevard. Approximately 63% of households in South Los Angeles are renters with only 8.2 %

of the resident's ages 25 and older had earned a four-year degree. The population of South Los

Angeles is approximately 750,000 of which 57% are Latino, 38% African-American, 2% Asian,

and 3% white and other (Los Angeles Time, 2016). Crime, poverty, and limited availability of

health care are pervasive and adversely affect South Los Angeles residential communities,

particularly in the area of educational attainment.

Located along a four-mile stretch of the 110 Freeway in South Los Angeles are the

Broadway-Manchester and Vermont-Slauson communities. Both of these areas are among the

highest densities for the city and county of Los Angeles with the Broadway-Manchester having

approximately 15,000 residents and Vermont-Slauson have nearly 19,000 African American and

Latino residents per square mile (Los Angeles Times, 2016).

The 2013 CST summative data in English Language Arts and Mathematics from the two

high-profile South Los Angeles neighborhoods is shown below. Table 1 delineates recent

achievement scores from two centrally located elementary schools and their feeder middle school

in South Los Angeles from the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont-Slauson communities is

referenced in Table 2. Although no longer administered, the CST was an annual assessment

given to students to measure their progress towards achieving the state standards.   Using a

compilation of test scores, schools were given an Academic Performance Index (API) score

based on the percentage of student proficiency in English-Language Arts, Mathematics, and

Science. According to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2002, schools were expected to

acquire an API score of 800 and attain 100% student proficiency by 2014. As indicated in the

data below, schools from the South Los Angeles areas continue to underperform and are ranked

in the bottom percentile when compared to other schools across California as evidenced by their

state rankings.

Table 1

California Standards Test Proficiency Scores – Elementary Schools

School	% Advanced & Proficient ELA 2013	% Below & Far Below Basic ELA 2013	% Advanced & Proficient Math 2013	% Below & Far Below Basic Math 2013	API Score 2012	API Score 2013	State API Rank 2013
Broadway-Manchester Area Elementary School	36	30	45	29	733	723	2
Vermont-Slauson Area Elementary School	36	32	51	26	720	718	1
District Results Elementary Schools	47	20	45	18			

California Department of Education, 2013

Table 2

California Standards Test Proficiency Scores – Middle Schools

School	% Advanced & Proficient ELA 2013	% Below & Far Below Basic ELA 2013	% Advanced & Proficient Math 2013	% Below & Far Below Basic Math 2013	API Score 2012	API Score 2013	State API Rank 2013
Broadway-Manchester Middle School	29	34	29	48	685	685	1
Vermont-Slauson Middle School	36	28	41	34	703	716	2
District Results Middle School	49	21	53	32			

California Department of Education, 2013

Community safety is a grave concern in the city of Los Angeles and for city officials. In

spite of numerous strategies for decreasing community violence, "after more than a decade of

decline, violent crime in Los Angeles rose more than 20% during the first half of 2015, with

felony assaults 26% and robberies up 19%" (Domanick, 2015, p. 1). Recently composite data

from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) reports during the spring of 2016, there were

approximately 535 violent crimes related to homicides, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults,

approximately 861 property crimes of burglary and motor vehicles theft, as well as nearly 1000

arrest in the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont Slauson areas alone (LAPD, 2016). Gerhenson

and Tekin (2015) conducted a case study to explore the impact of community trauma on student

performance based upon the Beltway Sniper attacks. These attacks were a series of unfortunate

events that took place in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC in October 2012. "On

average, test scores for schools within a few miles of the shooting, which left ten people dead

and three injured, declined as much as 9% between 2002 and 2003" (Abdul-Alim, 2015, p. 2).

More negative achievement results were experienced in communities that serve poor and black

populations. According to Abdul-Alim, the National Bureau of Economic Research reports, "the

Beltway Sniper attacks…hurt math and reading scores at elementary and middle schools in

Virginia that were in close proximity to the shootings" (p. 1).

Students from the South Los Angeles Area areas are regularly exposed to multiple forms

of violent episodes. One form of community violence that may influence student academic

results in low-income and minority areas are street gangs. Street gangs are groups of people who

typically claim control over a geographical territory and either individually or collectively

engages in violent or other forms of illegal behavior (LAPD, 2016). Gang activity is prevalent in

Los Angeles. "The County and City of Los Angeles are the "gang capital" of the nation. There

are more than 450 active gangs in the City of Los Angeles. Many of these gangs have been in

existence for over 50 years" (LAPD, 2016). The Los Angeles Police Department statistics

details, there were over 16, 398 verified violence gang crimes in the City of Angeles including

491 homicides, nearly 7,047 felony assaults, approximately 5518 robberies and 98 rapes since

2013 (LAPD, 2016).

The gangs operate by instilling fear and intimidation of area residents. Growth in

membership continues as you are led to believe that membership offers family kinship and will

be guaranteed protection, especially from any rival gangs. Motivations to join a gang also

include identity or recognition or achieving a certain status, protection from retaliation,

fellowship and brotherhood, intimidation tactics, and involvement in criminal activity that often

leads to profits (LAPD, 2016). With the increase in drug addiction, in recent years, one of the

major factors contributing to the steady increase of gangs, gang membership, and violence has

been the lucrative narcotics trade (LAPD, 2016).

Two of the most well-known and vicious gangs claim territory in the Broadway-

Manchester and Vermont-Slauson areas. The notable "Florencia or F13" from the Vermont-

Slauson area is a Hispanic gang whose violent activities are usually racially motivated against

the well-established African American community gangs. The F-13 gang is also notorious for

heavy drug trafficking across the county and state lines. Their members populate the California

prisons but still control gang operations from the prison walls. Another gang, the Bounty

Hunters located in the Watts community area is perhaps the largest African-American gang in

Los Angeles (LAPD, 2016).

During the summer of 2015, the Broadway-Manchester and the Vermont-Slauson issued

a malicious threat to residents of these two communities call "100-days, 100-nights" from July

2015 to September 2015 (Santa Cruz, 2015). Here, it was alleged the gangs vowed 100 days and

nights of violence in response to the death of a well-known gang leader. While the Los Angeles

Police Department indicated the "100-days, 100-nights" activities were a hoax, residents in the

South Los Angeles communities took extra precaution during that time (Santa Cruz, 2015).

Following the 100-days 100 Night's timelines, the academic achievement on quarterly

benchmark assessments in 2015 – 2016 school year indicate the results located in Table 3 as

compared to the results from the benchmark assessment scores from the prior year.

Table 3

2015 and 2016 Beginning of the Year (BOY) Proficiency Scores

School	SY 2015 BOY (Pre-Gang Threat)	SY 2016 BOY (Post-Gang Threat)	Difference
Broadway-Manchester Elementary	49%	47%	-2%
Vermont-Slauson	53%	49%	-4%
District Target	65%	65%	N/A

LAUSD Office of Data and Accountability 2016

In comparison, the data indicates following the "100-days-100-nights" threat of gang retaliation,

there was an overall decrease in achievement scores in English Language Arts scores in some of

the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont Slauson area schools. Although this decrease in test

scores does not necessarily explain causality from the gang threat, further analysis is needed to

study if by controlling the variable such as teacher quality and attendance rates would a

correlation exist between exposure to violence and academic achievement.

Of the one million residents in South Los Angeles, 31% are African American and 62%

are Latino. In 2000, the median income was approximately $27,000, more than double below

the federal poverty level (Park et al., 2008). According to a Los Angeles County Department of

Public Health report, "…the five leading causes of death in South Los Angeles are coronary heart disease, stroke, homicide, diabetes, and lung cancer" (Park et al., p. 17). Yet in neighborhoods of South Los Angeles, "options and opportunity for healthy choices are constrained by few and often inferior basic health care and physical resources" (Park et al., 2008, p. 3). A detailed listing of available area healthcare facilities is shown in Table 4. In addition to the struggles of adequate health care, there is only one major retail food chain in the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont-Slauson areas. Thus, limiting the healthy food choices for these area residents.

The aftermath of the 1992 Civil Unrest in South Los Angeles involving six days of rioting, looting, and arson following the acquittal of police officers for the inhumane treatment of a local citizen Rodney King sparked a major research study to galvanize health-related resources towards reinvestment of the repressed communities. From the study grew the South Los Angeles Health Scorecard. The scorecard focused on factors that influence behaviors by identifying immediate opportunities for growth and development in the area of healthcare services. It provides a comparative analysis of the availability of health resources in South Los Angeles to the economically stable community of West Los Angeles. Table 4 provides the names of the health care resources in the area. A few of the findings are listed below:

- South Los Angeles has an estimated 11 pediatricians for every 100,000 students compared to the 57 pediatricians for the same number of students in West Los Angeles.
- Twelve percent of the adults between the ages of 18 and 64 in West Los Angeles as compared to 30% in South Los Angeles are without healthcare insurance.
- South Los Angeles as nearly 8.5 liquor stores per square miles as compared to the nearly two stores in West Los Angeles.

- Five emergency rooms and/or hospitals have closed in South Los Angeles since 2000, leaving only one full-scale emergency room and trauma center at St. Francis Medical Center in the 94 square mile geographic area to serve more than one million residents.

- Sixty-four percent of the schools in South Los Angeles are considered insufficient with respect to textbooks and adequate facilities as compared to 8%.

Table 4

Health Services in the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont-Slauson Areas

Hospitals	Department of Health Services	Public-Private Partnership
St. Francis Medical Center	Hubert H. Humphrey Comprehensive Health Center	Kedran Community Health Center
	Martin Luther King Jr. Ambulatory Care Center	Central City Community Center
	Dollarhide Health Center	Watts Health Care Corporation
		Compton Central Health Clinic, Inc.

Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development Hospital Annual Profile from 2000 – 2006

The rise of health care demands in South Los Angeles due to the population density coupled with the scarce availability of medical facilities and resources has contributed to the community health crisis and depicts a dire need for local residents. The data shows that a comprehensive plan for additional health care services and options for healthy food choices are critical for the stability and future of the South Los Angeles communities. Thus, an urgent and immediate action is needed for city, state, and government. If the effort to transform inner-city urban schools in South Los Angeles into achieving centers of learning is to be attained, much

work remains to be addressed and ameliorated, including but not limited to community violence, gang activities, and health care and resources.

Political Influences

It has been over 60 years since the ruling of the historic case of Brown versus the Board of Education (1954) where the United States Supreme Court decided that the doctrine of "separate but equal" as it relates to public education was ruled to be a violation of the 14th Amendment and deemed unconstitutional. Some 30 years later, President Reagan "encouraged Congress to pass the Equal Protection Access Act of 1984 which … made it … unlawful for any public secondary school … to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against any student … on the basis of [a] religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech…" (Welner, 2015, p. 121). Today, similar tensions are heightened as California schools are facing another historic case that challenges previous notable laws in education and a favorable ruling would drastically impact the principal's decision making in operationalizing their school site. The case known as the *Vergara v. the State of California* or the teacher evaluation case has kindled much debate on the disproportionality of several educational statutes that affects poor and minority students (Reichman, 2015) and ultimately principal decision-making towards school effectiveness. The effects of such laws are more pronounced in large urban schools where enthusiastic, high-quality teachers are disproportionately displaced at high performing schools, and ineffective teachers are allowed to remain employed due to tenure and lower performing inner-city schools. Moreover, centered at the core of this case is the consideration of the role of litigation in our educational school system. In other words, public education is a states' responsibility and is too complicated to be discussed in the judicial system with participants who are far removed from the classroom. The need to improve our public

school system has been a top agenda item in this country for decades with little improvements to student achievement as compared to other countries. Despite numerous educational reform movements, the U.S. ranks 41st in Mathematics and 24th in Reading as compared to other countries according to the 2015 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report (Jackson & Kiersz , 2016). Moreover, for most of our inner-city urban schools, the problems "… are nuanced and complex, [and] the inequity is as clear and gaping as our student achievement gaps" (Nyamekye, 2014, p. 1). With this in mind, has it become obligatory that the courts intervene and provide guidance and direction in order to propel our schools towards increased student achievement? If so, the Vergara case could represent another movement towards improving our educational system. In fact, if one believes that teacher coupled with principal effectiveness is a key determinant of student achievement, then the decision by the court to eliminate teacher tenure and give local educational agencies and school principals the option of selecting staff based on performance rather than a hire date seems promising. Unfortunately, it is unknown if there will be any unintended consequences of the judicial ruling to strike down the teacher tenure laws in the future and any effects this will have on principal effectiveness.

Summary

For years, educators and politicians have attempted to find a resolution to increasing student achievement in our public school. The disparity in student achievement between students from lower socioeconomic minority communities and students of more economically stable communities continues to widen. With decades of documented reform efforts, none were more controversial than the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. During this era of standards-based and federal accountability, schools were identified based on an aggregate of annual yearly progress on the state's summative assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

According to Dee and Jacob (2010), a "fundamental motivation for this reform [effort] is the notion that publicizing detailed information on school-specific test performance and linking that performance to the possibility of meaning sanctions can improve the focus and productivity of public schools" (p. 149). Through punitive sanctions for non-performance, this federal government initiative promised to be the solution to years of failure in public school reform efforts. Thus, the NCLB reform efforts resulted in a failed attempted at narrowing the achievement gap among student subgroups.

Interestingly, literature related to reforming schools over the last 30 years centered on the influence of the school principal as a significant component to increasing student achievement and thus school success. According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2004), years of educational research confirms that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influencing student achievement. Additional research in more recent studies examined the relationship between the principal and student outcomes and identified characteristics and qualifications of an effective leader (Hull, 2012). An effective school leader is one who models expected behavior, well respected, a problem solver who can make difficult decisions, an exceptional listener, a visionary, and ultimately holds others accountable. On the average, students attending schools led by an effective principal score more than average achievement gains based on the annual summative assessment (Meador, 2014).

Equally important, school leaders have the potential to motivate and inspire staff within an organization and their actions and style of leadership have an impact on school success. Research offers a great deal about the leadership has an impact on school success. Research offers a great deal about the leadership behaviors, practices, or actions that are helpful in improving the impact of schools on the pupil outcomes (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris &

Hopkins, 2006). Yet, in spite of this information, urban schools in poor minority areas continue to struggle to implement reform efforts.

> Unfortunately, there has been very little acknowledgment of the fact that gaps in
> academic outcomes have multiple causes some of which are located within schools, but
> the vast majority of which can be attributed to the socioeconomic characteristics of
> students' families and neighborhoods (Goldstein, 2012, p. 1).

More than 20% of our students live in poverty in the U.S. are confronted with the ills of poverty (Flippo, 2015) in addition to repeated exposure to drugs and gang violence. A cursory examination of the communities in South Los Angeles shows that student achievement scores in state and district administered test fall below both the state and district averages. Three key variables of negative exposures, comprising of community violence, gang violence, and inadequate health care and physical resources were identified as major contributors in two of the South Los Angeles areas.

The exposure to both community and gang violence is on a daily basis for the children in the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont-Slauson corridors, and the poverty rate based on the poverty rate income is more than double the national average. Some of the most notorious and dangerous gangs are headquartered in the South Los Angeles in reference. Felony, assault, robbery, rape, prostitution, and drug trafficking are reportedly rampant and students who walk through the doors of community schools face the impossible and almost unavoidable exposure to the trauma of many if not all of these vices.

As a result, public school principals assigned to such high-poverty inner-city schools are more likely to face additional and different challenging obstacles that may influence the leader's decision making and ultimately school success than principals in schools in more affluent

communities. These challenges according to Gehrke (as cited in Gehrke 2005) include "conditions of overcrowding, high turnover of faculty, limited resources, economic differences in salaries and supplies, and a great number of students at risk for academic failure" (p. 15). Furthermore, the exposure to community and gang violence undermines any meaning reform effort to improve student achievement. But, when compounded by poor health care facilities, lack of sufficient resources, as common as grocery stores, the challenge of closing the achievement gap becomes even more daunting.

The focus of this study is to identify those characteristics that exist in the large urban inner-city school Los Angeles communities that hinder the principal from implementing reform efforts. The study will explore the characteristics and qualities of the inner-city urban school leader, the leadership style and behaviors of the inner-city school leaders, instructional leadership, the inner-city urban school community, and the political influence. This study will offer insights for schools and school districts to improve the education for inner-city minority students.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overall, efforts to reform the quality of education received by many low-income minority students in the urban inner-city have been unsuccessful. This chapter introduces the methodology used to investigate the influences that impact the successful implementation of reform methods by elementary school principals within two communities in South Los Angeles. It conveys the qualitative design, the setting and participants, sampling procedures, instrumentation and measures, data collection and analysis, and ethical issues used during the investigation. The study involved five critical factors: qualities and characteristics of an urban school principal, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, community concerns, and political influences that affect the principal's decision-making. This case study involved staff from two low-performing inner-city elementary schools ranked, by the California Department of Education (CDE), in the lowest 5% of all elementary schools in the state, and was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What effect do principal leadership practices, based on the principal's leadership style as measured on the MLQ-5X, and instructional leadership practices, as measured by the PIMRS, have on academic school success?

    a. What are the principal's perceptions of their leadership style behavior scores as measured on the MLQ-5X and instructional leadership behavior scores as measured on the PIMRS?

    b. What are the teacher's perceptions of their principal's leadership style behavior scores as measured on the MLQ-5X and instructional leadership behavior scores as measured on the PIMRS?

c. Does the principal's perception of their leadership style behavior scores as

measured on the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership behavior scores as

measured on the PIMRS align with the teacher's perspective?

2. How do principals utilize the key factors "characteristics and qualities of an effective

school leader," "leadership style and behavior," "instructional leadership," "inner-city

urban community," and "political influences" to improve school effectiveness in the

urban inner-city elementary school?

a. What are the principal's perceptions of the key factors and their importance to

successfully implementing reform strategies?

b. What are the teacher's perceptions of the impact of the key factors on improving

school-wide achievement leadership practices?

c. How do the principal's leadership practices align with the key areas?

This study is a sequential transformative mixed-method design that required consecutive

collection and analysis of data from two surveys (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative). The

school principal maintained a log of daily activities for a week (qualitative). Moreover,

throughout the study, the researcher was able to record additional data through the use of

observational field notes, photographs, and various resources from community agencies. The

data from each instrument was distinctly analyzed, integrated, and then compared for verification

of credibility to increase the validity and reliability of the study (Creswell, 2007).

This research uniquely studied the relationship between the principal's efforts, based on

key areas, and student achievement to gain a perspective on the correlation between actual

administrative leadership practices and successful execution of instructional improvement

strategies in struggling inner-city elementary schools. It is important to mention that the

indicator used for successful reform implementation was student academic achievement data from the school district and the CDE. Finally, it was the expectation that the findings would not only advance the understanding of more effective reform strategies in these urban inner-city communities, but that it would provide insight for district leadership on instructional improvements and considerations for policies regarding schools serving predominately low-income inner-city families.

Schools and Selection of Participants

The school district covers approximately 720 square miles, with 640,000 student residents at the time this data was extracted. The total composite demographic data consisted of 74% Latino, 10% White, 8% African American, 6% Asian, and 2% other. Nearly 80% of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch and lived at or below the poverty line (LAUSD Local Control and Accountability Plan, 2015). This district was selected because it has a student population that is disproportionately comprised of minorities and because the majority of the students live in poverty. Yet, much work remains to determine how many district schools, located in areas surrounding the inner-city boundaries, consistently meet the expectations of proficiency in mathematics and reading/language arts on academic assessments while numerous schools in the low-income inner-city minority areas, such as those located in South Los Angeles, historically underperform on the same assessments. Of interest, the data indicates 50% of the students from the Broadway-Manchester and Vermont-Slauson neighborhoods are reading below grade level, and 61% are below grade level in mathematics concepts and procedures (LAUSD, 2016). The study participants were current elementary principals, assistant principals, and a minimum of 30% of the teachers from two schools in South Los Angeles. School A resides in the Broadway-Manchester community and School C is located in the Vermont-Slauson area.

Professors Gershenson and Tekin, of American University's School of Public Affairs, explored the impact of traumatic community violence on kids' academic performance. They concluded that academic performance shows a significant decline following exposure to violence (Abdul- Alim, 2015). The academic achievement results of each participant school are located in Table 5. Both schools are located less than three miles from the 1992 Civil Unrest, and the 2014-2015 summative assessment results indicated that both schools' academic performance is among the lowest in California. The summative assessment scores are used to determine a student's academic progress each year based on a set of fixed grade level standards. Similar to a standard percentage scale, where 100% represents maximum score, the data from these schools indicate a rank in the bottom percentile in reading and mathematics. The test is given in 3rd through 8th and 11th grades.

Table 5

2014 – 2015 Academic Data for Participating Schools

School Elementary	Total Enrollment 2014 – 2015	Reading %	Mathematics %	Principal Experience (years)	Community
A	998	8	6	3	Broadway-Manchester
C	825	17	12	3	Vermont-Slauson

California Department of Education, 2015/LAPD, 2016

Sampling Procedures

The purposeful sampling technique was utilized to select the schools and for inviting the teacher participants. The principal participants were selected based the Convenient Sampling approach or were asked for their volunteer participation. The criteria used to determine a viable sample include: (a) Elementary schools that are approximately three miles from the 1992 Civil Unrest in South Los Angeles, (b) The principal has been assigned to the selected school site for a

minimum of three years, (c) Teacher participants must have been employed for at least two years under the identified school principal at the selected site, (d) The school has a minimum of two years of Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) data with scores below the target proficiency, (e) Summative scores represent a minimum 95% student participation rate in all eligible grades, and (f) The school operates on a Kindergarten to sixth grade configuration. The criteria identified seven qualifying schools one of which was appeared on the California Department of Education 2016 list of low performing schools based on 2014 – 2015 data. To maintain consistency and ensure validity, identification criteria of low performing schools for this study were identified using the 2014 – 2015 baseline school year data. Table 6 identifies the seven qualifying schools and the most recent criterion data.

Table 6

2014 – 2016 SBAC Summative Assessment Data for Qualifying Schools

School	ELA 2014 – 15 Proficiency %	ELA 2015 – 16 Proficiency %	Math 2014 – 15 Proficiency %	ELA 2015 – 16 Proficiency %	Distance from Epicenter %	Principal Years at School
A	8	16	6	9	2.6	4
B	12	20	5	16	2.6	7
C	17	25	12	11	1.2	4
D	17	21	14	15	1.8	15
E	19	27	14	19	2.1	17
F	20	22	17	25	3.2	4
G	25	27	24	19	1.1	5

Resources: California Department of Education, 2014; Mapquest, 2016; LAUSD, 2016

Following, the schools were sorted according to their 2014 – 2015 SBAC scores in reading language arts and mathematics in ranking order. Out of the seven qualifying schools, two of the lowest performing elementary schools were selected (see table below for school selection rationale). One school is located in the Vermont-Slauson community approximately one mile south of the epicenter of the civil disturbance and the other is located in the Broadway-Manchester neighborhood located approximately two and a half miles north from the six-day protest.

School A is in the lowest 5% of all schools in the state of California in mathematics and reading language arts (California Department of Education, 2016) based on the 2014 – 2015 SBAC data. Two additional schools were considered. School profiles B and C are the next two lowest-performing schools that met the criteria for the study. However, of these two schools, School C has similar student enrollment count and the number of years of experience of the principal at the current school site similar to that of School A. Thus, to ensure comparative sample, School B was removed from consideration leaving Schools A and School C as participants for the study.

Invitations to participants were distributed to both school principals and their classroom teachers. Using a random purposive sampling approach, teachers with a minimum of two years experience at the selected school with the identified principal were given a questionnaire. Following, using a systematic sampling approach, every third teacher who returned the survey was invited to participate in a one-hour interview. In addition to completing a leadership and instructional surveys, the school principals and assistant principals participated in a separate interview and the principals maintained an activity log for four consecutive days for the purpose of capturing their daily activities and understanding how these activities affect reform efforts.

Instrumentation and Measures

Careful consideration was given to selecting the most appropriate instruments for this research. A detailed review of historical artifacts and documents such as school and district achievement data, community information such as law enforcement crime statistics, and records relating to available health care facilities and socioeconomic factors were considered.

The study utilized two surveys, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ – 5x) and the Principal Instrumental Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), focus group and individual interviews, and artifact reviews (Appendix A and Appendix B). Permission to utilize both surveys was granted to the researcher from of the copyright holders (Appendix K and Appendix L).

The MLQ – 5X instrument measures a broad range of leadership types and behaviors identifying the characteristics of the principal as transformational, transactional, or passive-avoidant or laissez-faire. Information from the survey by Bass and Avolio helps individuals discover how their leadership style measures up in their own eyes and in the eyes of colleagues (Bass, 2004). After the researcher purchased the survey from Mind Garden, Inc., the copyrighted version of the survey was used in its entirety. The MLQ-5X had 47 items in total and the completion time was approximately 20 minutes. Participants responded to the behavior statement using a Likert scale with options from "not at all" to "frequently, if not always". There were 45 behavior statements with two additional questions added by the researcher. One question asked the participant to identify the school of employment and one open-ended question was given to provide the opportunity for information not specifically asked on the survey. Of the 45 behavioral statement provided by the publisher, nine questions address extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction to support information about the outcomes of leadership. The remaining 36

questions were divided into nine leadership subscales: idealized influences (attributed), idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception (active), management-by-exception (passive), laissez-faire leadership, extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction. These leadership scales were used to determine the principal's leadership characteristics as similar to transformative, transactional, or laissez-faire. The specific composition of the MLQ-5X by characteristics and scale name is identified in Table 7.

Table 7

Composition of MLQ-5X Leadership Scales

Characteristic	Scale Name	Description of Scale
Transformation	Idealized Attributes or Idealized Influence (Attributes)	Charisma of the Leader. Trust is a likely result by followers
Transformation	Idealized Behavior or Idealized Influences (Behaviors)	Collective sense of mission and values
Transformational	Inspirational Motivation	The vision of the leader
Transformational	Intellectual Stimulation	Challenges the assumptions
Transformational	Individual Consideration	Developing strengths
Transactional	Contingent Reward	Focused on defined tasks
Transactional	Management by Exception (Active)	Intervening following an error
Laissez-Faire	Management by Exception (Passive)	Absence of leadership
Laissez-Faire	Laissez-Faire	Absence of leadership

Note. Adapted from "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Instrument: Psychometric properties of German translation " by J. Rowold, 2004. (http://www.mindgarden.com/documents/MLQGermanPsychometric.pdf). Copyright 2005 by Mind Garden, Inc. In the public domain.

Participants were asked to respond to a total of 55 questions that included 50 behavioral statements on the PIMRS survey that described leadership practices using a Likert scale with

options from "almost never" to "almost always". There were four questions that sought

demographic information and an additional open-ended question for extra comments on the topic.

The PIMRS developed by Hallinger in 1983 determines the degree to which principals serve as

instructional managers focusing on the instructional leadership behaviors exhibited by the

principal in three main domains: (a) defining the school's mission; (b) managing the instructional

program; (c) promoting a positive school-learning climate (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Gurley, K.,

Anast-May, L., O'Neil, M., & Dozier, R., 2016). Participants were asked to respond based on

their perception of the frequency in which the principals engage in the specific behavior. The

results of the survey were used to answer the research question, is there a significant relationship

between the principal's leadership strategies based on the key factors: leadership style and

behavior, instructional leadership, inner-city urban community, and political influences and

school-wide summative achievement data. The specific composition of the PIMRS by

characteristics and description is identified in Table 8.

Table 8

Composition of PIMRS Subscales

Scale Name	Description of Scale
Framing the School Goals	Areas the school will focus its resources
Communicating the School Goals	Method of communicating the school's goals to the stakeholders
Supervision & Evaluation of Instruction	Evaluating the translations of the goals into the classroom practices
Curricular Coordination	The curriculum is aligned to the content being taught and the achievement results
Monitoring Student Progress	Using assessment data to monitor student progress

Protecting Instructional Time	Providing teachers with blocks of uninterrupted work time
Visibility	Visibility on the campus and in the classrooms
Incentives to Improve Teaching	Providing teachers with formal and informal praise
Promote Professional Development	Encourage training that aligns with the goals
Provide Incentives for Learning	Providing opportunities for students to be rewarded for academic achievement

Note: Adapted from "Assessing the Instructional Management Behavior of Principals", by P. Hallinger and J. Murphy. 1985. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217 – 247 by University of Chicago. Adapted with permission.

A one hour interview with nine teachers in a focus group (Appendix C) and an individual interview (Appendix D) with the school principal was a mode of data collection for the initial question on how the principal's understanding of the following key factors: characteristics and qualities of an effective leader, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, inner-city urban community, and political influences impact their decision-making towards implementation of reform strategies.

Journaling is a great way to record and reflect on written information. Principals were asked to record their daily activities by maintaining a list of activities in 30-minute intervals and coding, categorizing, and interpretation.

Finally, combining the results from the historical data analysis, surveys regarding principal style and instructional leadership, the interviews, and the logs submitted by the principal were triangulated to obtained thorough and conclusive results.

Reliability and Validity.

The construct of reliability and validity is used to strengthen the process of triangulating the various data sources and corroborates the instrument results. To this end, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative data sources to obtain multiple perspectives of the phenomena. To ensure consistency and reliability, documents and other artifacts acquired for this study

represented a three-year time period. Furthermore, both of the survey instruments have been

measured and tested for reliability and validity. According to the publisher's website, the MLQ

instrument has been used by education, business, and military personnel in more than 300

master's and doctoral thesis and the reliabilities for each subscale range from .74 to .91

(MindGarden, 2014). "The PIMRS has been used extensively over the last three decades by

numerous school systems and in more than 375 empirical studies conducted in 22 countries"

(Hallinger, 2011).

Creswell (2007) offers eight strategies frequently used by qualitative researchers to ensure

validity. The researcher used four of the strategies as part of the validation of this research. First,

with prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, the researcher has worked and

developed a trusting relationship with the identified schools in this study and is seen as

dependable and as a voice of reason. Next, the researcher received the support of two professional

educators who offered assistance and guidance through dialogue and inquiry. Third, the data

from each instrument will be distinctly analyzed then compared for verification of credible

information. This process of triangulation ensured consistency and validation from multiple data

sources. The results were merged for in-depth interpretation of the state problem of practice.

Data Collection

The primary data sources for this study were the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS

surveys, in-depth interviews, district archival data, community document reviews for each school,

and an administrative activity log.

The first step was to complete an analysis of various historical data for each school site

such as school-wide achievement scores (i.e. based on California Standards Test, Smarter

Balanced Assessment Consortium, and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills),

percent of students qualified for free and reduced meal eligibility, annual attendance rates for staff

and students, school-wide suspension data, neighborhood statistical information such as resident

education level, income, crime, poverty index, and availability of neighboring health care

facilities was collected and reviewed for each school and the corresponding school community.

Next, the principals were asked if they would voluntarily consent to participate and were

given an "invitation to participate", a letter of introduction to the study (Appendix E). They were

asked to distribute the letter to their teachers during a staff meeting and the researcher made a

brief 10-minute presentation at the conclusion of the next meeting. Both the letter and the brief

presentation consisted of information regarding the purpose, the problem statement, why the

school was selected, how the information obtained would enhance their school community, and

explain that participation is voluntary. Participants were assured of anonymity of their responses.

Next, the researcher asked the principal for a list of classroom teachers with a minimum of two

years experience under their leadership. All participants signed a "participant consent agreement"

shown in Appendix F. The following week, the principal made a short announcement notifying

selected teachers of the date to complete the two surveys in their on-site computer lab after

working hours. Both the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS surveys were completed in a total of 40-

minutes using Survey Monkey, an online platform. The simple random sampling procedure was

used to invite every third teacher who completed the surveys the focus group interview per site.

The principals were sent a thank you email for consenting to participate that included a link to

complete both surveys. The assistant principal email offered a thank you for consenting to

participate. However, they were not invited to participate in the survey. The email included the

time, date, and location of the one-to-one structured interview for the purpose of acquiring in-

depth perceptions of understanding and utilization of the effects of the five key factors.

Teachers and administrators were provided a flyer with the reporting details for the

interviews (Appendix G and Appendix H). To ensure validity of the data, the researcher used

three non-biased individuals to facilitate all interviews that included a moderator and two

additional individuals for note taking for both schools. Prior to the beginning of the interviews,

contents of the consent form were review with the participants. The form included the

authorization for the use of the audio recording.

Next, the school site principals participated in a one-hour interview where the focus is part

of the qualitative study also includes teacher participants. A sample group of teachers was invited

to participate in a focus group interview to ascertain information of their perceptions and

alignment of the leadership style of their principal with respect to the five key indicators.

Data Analysis

According to Lochmiller & Lester (2016), "qualitative research … seek[s] to understand

social life as it unfolds in its natural environment" (p. 93). In contrast, quantitative research

designs "… tend to be more heavily standardized and structured (p. 121) concentrating on

measures typically represented by numerical data to make sense of worldly phenomena. This

study utilized a Mix-Method research mode of inquiry. Specifically, through the lens of the

Coherence Framework by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn as well as the PELP Coherence

Framework by Childress, et al proposed a Sequential Transformative Mixed Method design

requiring consecutive collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

To increase validity and reliability, the data from each instrument was distinctly analyzed

then compared for verification and credibility. The results of each individual case were then

merged for a cross-case analysis and for in-depth interpretation of the state problem of practice.

This process of triangulation ensured consistency and validation from multiple data sources. A

Diagram for Sequential Transformative Research Design used for this study is shown in Figure 3.
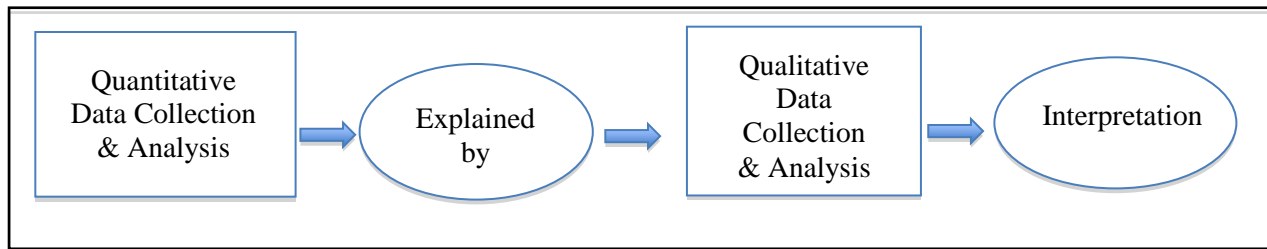
Figure 3. Diagram for Sequential Transformative Research Design

The plan of analysis required the information from each instrument be analyzed separately then merged for coherence. The study utilized the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS surveys and the analysis were gathered through the use of descriptive statistics, using SPSS Software Version 24 to determine if differences (if any) were evident between the principal's perception of their instructional leadership and the teacher's perception of the principal's leadership style and instructional leadership. Each publisher of the two surveys also provided an analysis of the participant data was used to further conceptualize understanding.

The information from the participant interviews was used to determine their understanding of the importance of the five key areas to implementing reform strategies and the utilization of these areas by the school principal. All interviews were audio recorded.

The company "Gotranscipt" was used to transcribe the audio recordings. Thematic coding (open, axial, and selective) was then used to analyze the qualitative interview data. Using NVIVO, software for qualitative analysis, the data was coded to identify emerging themes. The data was analyzed by using an open coding format to conceptualize the entire phenomenon and to be able to divide the data into meaningful clusters. To make sense of the data, axial coding was used to integrate the information and finally selective coding to elaborate on the findings to determine the meaning. Understanding the overall phenomenon will require converging the analysis from both the quantitative and the qualitative components.

Finally, the principals maintained a journal log to gather descriptions of daily administrative activities. These activities were analyzed for alignment with the key areas of effective leadership, characteristics and qualities of an inner-city urban school leader, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, the inner-city urban school communities, and the political influences to gain insight into principal's perceptions of their leadership and their actual activities.

Ethical Issues

The researcher fully understands and maintained responsibility for knowing the guidelines and adhered to the policies and procedures of the National Institute of Health certification (Appendix J), District and University IRB regulations. In addition, the researcher performed all aspects of the research, including investigations and analysis to the best of her abilities and with integrity. All precautions were taken to ensure the privacy of each participant and ethical treatment throughout the process. To minimize the risk of all individuals participating in the study, the researcher ensured anonymity by securing the confidentiality of the personal identity of all subjects. All data collected were stored and locked under password protection. Also, all participants were asked to sign the Consent of Voluntary Participation that detailed the study process, procedures, and expectations as study participants. To avoid the possibility of any undue stress, the research was not present during the interview portions. A non-biased individual completed this activity. Finally, the participants were assigned a participant number and this information was only available to the researcher. The researcher will also be responsible for all possible study-related adverse events.

Researchers Beliefs and Biases

It is important to share the beliefs and biases of the researcher as to not limit the results of the study and to work to maintain credibility and trustworthiness during the course of the study. Flipp (2014) reveals a quality research is where "the process of setting aside personal experiences, biases, preconceived notions about the research" occurs. Although unintended, the possibility of aspects of the background of the researcher and work relationships with the participants might have led to unintended bias. The researcher is the direct supervisor of both school site principals with responsibilities of school oversight in the area of operations and instruction. As the supervisor, the researcher is also responsible for the evaluation of the principal.

Through the process of reflexivity and bracketing, the researcher set aside previous experiences and personal biases in order to attain a deep understanding of the stated problem of practice. According to Flipp (2014), engaging in dialogue with colleagues prior to beginning the study, maintaining a bracketing journal, and recording any personal bias during the investigative phase assists with maintaining credibility and trustworthiness. The researcher will utilize this recommendation.

The research has nearly 25 years of experience as an educator in South Los Angeles and was able to transform a failing elementary school of nearly 900 low-income minority students from the South Los Angeles area into a school that achieved great success and received numerous awards. It is hoped that this research study contributes to understanding the daily activities of schools within these impoverished areas to better support improvements. Minority students educated in South Los Angeles need solutions to the institutional barriers that continue to prevent successful academic achievement.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to describe the influences within the urban school community that impede or support the implementation of reform efforts by the elementary school principal. It takes into consideration the effects of several factors such as principal leadership style and behavior, characteristics of the urban school community, political influences, the effect of culture on school success, as well as the principal's instructional leadership efforts to gain a perspective of effective principal leadership and the impact on student achievement in the inner-city. According to Lochmiller & Lester (2016), "qualitative research … seek[s] to understand social life as it unfolds in its natural environment" (p. 93). In contrast, quantitative research designs "… tend to be more heavily standardized and structured (p. 121). It concentrates on uniform measures, typically represented by numerical data to make sense of worldly phenomena. The research proposes to utilize a sequential transformative mixed method design requiring both qualitative and quantitative methods collected in parallel, analyzed separately, and the results merged in order to evaluate the stated problem of practice.

A variety of data would provide a comprehensive picture for a study of this magnitude. The researcher will solicit at least three to five schools located in the South Los Angeles, no more than a three-mile radius from the Watts Community. Specifically targeting schools with a minimum composition of 85% ethnic minority, 85% poverty and a maximum of 85% of the student body designated as low performing (i.e. schools in the lowest achievement quartile based on the SBAC Assessment in English Language Arts.

To begin, the first step is to complete a quantitative study of historical data such as school-wide achievement scores (i.e. based on SBAC or CST), student percent qualification of free and reduced meal eligibility counts, and neighborhood statistical information. Concurrently, the researcher will engage in a qualitative school-wide observation study to describe events and

stakeholder behaviors observed on campus. At the same time, each principal and their

participating teachers would take a survey to gain a perspective on aspects of the principal's

leadership. Following, a qualitative study would include the school site principals participating in

a one-hour interview where the focus is to obtain in-depth perceptions of the effects of the five

key factors: (a) principal leadership style and behavior, (b) characteristics of the urban school

community, (c) political influences, (d) the effect of culture on school success, and (e) the

principal's instructional leadership. A second interview with the principals may be scheduled to

allow an opportunity for the researcher to clarify information previously obtained. The final step

will be to conduct a correlational study to determine if the teacher's perception of their leadership

style aligns with their principal's perspective.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter four details the findings of the study and the statistical analysis of the results. This chapter presents a description of the populations studied and a thorough discussion of the findings attained from the two surveys and from the six in-depth, semi-structured interviews of the two elementary principals, two elementary assistant principals, and two focus groups of teachers from their respective schools. The researcher sought feedback and guidance from an educator with a doctoral degree in the analysis of the data findings and completed modifications based on this feedback. This peer review served as the inter-rater reliability for this study. While this chapter will provide the results of the data analysis, the discussion of these results will occur in chapter five.

MLQ – 5X and PIMRS Results

The first research question, along with four sub-questions, asked what effect principal leadership practices, based on the principal's leadership style as measured on the MLQ-5X, and instructional leadership practices, as measured by the PIMRS, have on academic school success and was answered with the quantitative analysis. To begin, the principal and teacher participants were asked to respond to the survey MLQ-5X for the purpose of illustrating the principal's leadership behaviors. The MLQ-5X short survey provided principals with information to discover their leadership style and the style identified by their staff. The MLQ-5X measured three leadership styles and categorized the behaviors of the principal as transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire. There was a total of 47 questions including one question to identify the participant's work location and one open-ended question that allowed the participant to provide additional information of their choice.

Immediately following the administration of the MLQ-5X survey, principals and

teachers took the PIMRS survey (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The survey consisted of a total of 55 questions. Four questions sought demographic information, and one open-ended question allowed the participant to provide additional information not asked on the standard survey. The 50 behavioral statements provided a measure of the frequency with which the principals engaged in, or were observed to have engaged in, instructional leadership practices. The results included considerations to determine the level of instructional leadership behaviors of the principal and the relationship between the observed behaviors indicated by the teachers to that of their principal.

Description of the Survey Sample

At the onset of the study, the principals of School A and School C agreed to allow the school staff to participate in the study. These schools were identified because they are located less than three miles from the 1992 Civil Unrest, and the 2014-2015 summative assessment results in language arts and mathematics were among the lowest in the state. The quantitative data analysis began by understanding the response rate of the principals ($n = 2$), assistant principal ($n = 1$), and teachers ($n = 49$), as well as the demographic characteristics from the participants at each selected school. It was observed that 100% of the principals participated in completing the surveys, and approximately 58% of the eligible teachers completed both surveys. In total, there were 52 individuals who participated in the quantitative components of the study, including two principals who lead state identified low-performing, high-poverty elementary schools in South Los Angeles, 49 teachers, and one assistant principal who erroneously logged onto the platform and completed one of the two teacher surveys. Because the survey responses were anonymous, the responses from the assistant principal were included among the teacher results for the MLQ-5X survey. School A indicated 31 of the 43 eligible teachers (72.1%) participated in the survey portion of the study, and of the eligible teachers at School C, 18 out of the 42 teachers (42.9%) participated. The numerical details can be located in Table 9. On average, information was gathered from nearly

60% of the teachers from School A and School C combined indicating a highly correlation in terms of validity of the responses.

Table 9

Teacher PIMRS and MLQ – 5x Survey Response Rate

School	Number of Eligible Teachers	Sample Size Teachers	Response Rate (%)
A	43	31	72.1%
C	42	18	42.9%

As shown in Table 10, provides the demographic information of the school principals. Of the two school principals, one principal had completed her fourth year of her first principal assignment, and the second principal had a total of eight years of principal experience, with four years at the current school site. Among the teachers from both schools, 28 participants (57%) have worked with their current principal at their current school site for four years, and a total of 39 (80%) of the teacher participants have been in the teaching profession for a minimum of 10 years. The years of experience of the teachers from both schools were similar. In total, 48% of the teachers from School A had a minimum of 15 years of experience, and at School C, 44% of the participating teachers had at least 15 years of experience as a teacher. Table 11 illustrates the demographic data for the teacher participants. Thus, the teachers from School A and School C have a wealth of teaching experience in current school community.

Table 10

Demographics Information of Principal Experience

Characteristics	*N*	*%*
Total Principal Experience		
Principal 2-4 Years	1	50
Principal 5-9 Years	0	50
Principal 10-15 Years	0	0
Principal More Than 15 Years	1	0
Principal Experience at Selected Site		
2 Years	0	0
3 Years	0	0
4 Years	2	100

Table 11

Demographics Information of Teacher Experience

Characteristics	School A (*N*)	School A (*%*)	School C (*N*)	School C (*%*)	Total Response (*N*)	Total Response (*%*)
Years Worked with Principal						
2 Years	4	13+	3	17+	7	14
3 Years	4	13+	7	39+	11	23+
4 Years	20	65+	8	44+	28	57
No response	3	9+	0	0	3	6
Total	31	100	18	100	49	100
Years of Experience as a Teacher						
2 - 4 Years	3	10+	1	6+	4	8
5 - 9 Years	2	7+	3	17+	5	10
10 - 15 Years	10	32+	6	33	16	33
More than 15 Years	15	48	8	44	23	47
Skipped	1	3	0	0	1	2
Total	31	100	18	100	49	100

Note: + denotes rounding error

Internal Consistency

The internal consistency for all items in the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS was considered using Cronbach's alpha. Develop by Cronbach in 1951, Cronbach's alpha is a way to measure consistency or reliability (Andale, 2014). According to Andale (2014), "reliability is how well a test consistently measures what it should" (para.1). Table 12 indicates the various degrees of internal consistency ratings. When considering both the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS, alpha scores greater than 0.7 are considered acceptable and indicate satisfactory internal consistency among the survey items.

Due to the small number of principals in the study, Cronbach's alpha for the principal survey could not be calculated. In this study, Cronbach's alpha provided evidence of the reliability of the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS scores based on the teacher responses and indicated how closely related the items in each subscale were as a group.

Table 12

Interpreting Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Note. Adapted from Cronbach's Alpha: Simple Definition, Use and Interpretation by Andale, 2014, Retrieved from
http://www.statisticshowto.com/cronbachs-alpha-spss/

Reliability scores for the MLQ-5X are represented in Table 13. The consistency scores for all nine subscales and three outcome leadership subscales on the MLQ-5X were completed. The three outcome leadership scales (extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction) relate to the outcome of a leader's behavior and not specifically to a measure of leadership style. Therefore, these measures were not considered for the purpose of this study. The coefficient scores of the nine remaining scales provided an indication of the principal's perceived leadership style as more aligned to transformative, transactional, or laissez-faire. The scores for six of the nine scales were in the acceptable range ($\alpha \geq 0.735$), and three of the subscale scores were in the questionable range ($\alpha \leq 0.676$). Cronbach's alpha for the individualized consideration subscale for both schools ($\alpha \leq 0.600$) and the management-by-exception –active subscale for School C ($\alpha = -0.345$) reveal the survey items were not reliable. Individualized Consideration refers to the leader's perceived leadership as demonstrated by the consideration of the needs of others.

Table 13

Reliability Scores for Subscales of MLQ-5X Survey - Teacher

Scale	Cronbach's α School A	Cronbach's α School C	Description of Subscale		
Idealized Influence (Attributed)	.676	.826	Followers built emotional ties to the leader		
Idealized Influence (Behavior)	.815	.912	Emphasis on collective sense of mission		
Inspirational Motivation	.796	.890	Representation of vision by the leader; followers are motivated		
Intellectualized Stimulation	.799	.901	Challenges the assumptions of followers beliefs		
Individualized Consideration	.581	.519	Considering individual needs and developing their individual strengths		
Contingent Rewards	.762	.826	Providing followers with rewards for completing a task		
Management-By-Exception (Active)	.745	-.345	The leader observes for deviations from the rules		
Management-By-Exception (Passive)	.780	.735	Intervening only after errors have been detected		
Laissez-Faire	.762	.847	Absence of leadership		
Extra Effort	.668	.898	Outcome criteria of effective Leadership		
Effectiveness	.918	.939	Outcome criteria of effective Leadership		
Satisfaction	.502	.892	Outcome criteria of effective Leadership		

coefficients for the 10 subscales for both schools on the PIMRS survey for instructional

leadership were completed with all subscales scoring within an acceptable to excellent Cronbach

alpha range, $.724 \geq \alpha \leq .931$. The data confirm a strong indication of internal consistency among

the survey items for both schools. The numerical data is located in Table 14.

Table 14

Reliability Scores for Instructional Leadership (PIMRS) - Teacher

Scale	Cronbach's α School A Teacher	Cronbach's α School C Teacher	Description of Subscale
Framing The School Goals	.899	.865	Areas the school will focus its resources
Communicating The Schools Goals	.890	.851	Method of communicating the school's goals to the stakeholders
Supervising and Evaluating Instruction	.832	.750	Evaluating the translations of the goals into the classroom practices
Coordinating the Curriculum	.931	.792	The Curriculum is aligned to the content being taught and the achievement results
Monitor Student Progress	.855	.792	Using assessment data to monitor student progress
Protect Instructional Time	.822	.737	Providing teachers with blocks of uninterrupted work time
Maintain High Visibility	.775	.724	Visibility on the campus and in the classrooms
Provide Incentives For Teachers	.872	.908	Providing teachers with formal and informal praise
Promote Professional Development	.869	.883	Encourage trainings that align with the goals
Provide Incentives For Learning	.782	.887	Providing opportunities for students to be rewarded for academic achievement

Principal's Leadership Practices

The first research question seeks to understand the influences of the principal's leadership practices on implementing reform strategies for academic school success. To ascertain this information, four sub-questions were designed to address the principal's instructional leadership, and leadership style and behaviors from their perspective and the perceptions of their assistant principal and teachers.

The first sub-question examined the principal's perceptions of their leadership style as measured on the MLQ-5x and their instructional leadership methods as measured on the PIMRS. The data from the MLQ – 5X, principal respondents classified themselves as demonstrating leadership similar to that of transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire style of behavior based

on the scores from three categories. The scores ranged from 0 to 4 with a score of a 4 indicating the leadership behavior is observed frequently.

Table 15 includes the MLQ-5X survey results from 36 of the 45 questions representing leadership characteristics as perceived by the principals (n = 2). The overall grand means for the principal's self-perception from the MLQ-5X results (36 items) for the principal of School A ranged from a high of $M = 3.50$ in the transformational style of leadership to a low of $M = 0.25$ Laissez-Faire. The mean for the two highest sub-areas was $M = 3.75$ for each in Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation. Inspirational Motivation subscale is indicative of a leader sharing goals and the articulation of a vision. Leaders who perceived themselves as high functioning in the Intellectual Stimulation subscale think about problems in new ways. Leaders who exercise intellectual stimulation are guided to question their own beliefs, assumptions, and values (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The mean data for School C ranged from $M = 3.75$ in the transformational style of leadership to a low of $M = 0.00$ in laissez-faire style. Within the transformational subscale, the Inspirational Motivation was received the highest score of $M = 4.00$. The self-perception of the principal of School C is they share a vision of what is possible. According to Avolio and Bass (2004), the question one must ask is "to are they inspiring-themselves or the greater good of their group" (p. 30).

Accordingly, principals from both School A and School C perceived themselves as more of a transformational leader. The grand mean for transformational leadership was $M = 3.50$ and $M = 3.75$ respectively. The grand mean for the transactional leadership scale was $M = 2.45$ and $M = 2.43$ and the grand mean for the passive/avoidant leadership or laissez-faire was $M = 0.25$ and $M = 0.00$. Interestingly, when considering both responses as an aggregate, the most favorable response from the principals was 3.88 for the subscale Inspirational Motivation and the least desirable leadership behavior was $M = 0.13$ Laissez Faire. The results are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Comparative Subscales Mean on MLQ – 5X - Principal's Self Perception

Leadership Scales and Subscales	Items	School A (*N*=1)	School C (*N*=1)
Transformational Subscales	20		
Inspirational Motivation	4	3.75	4.00
Intellectual Stimulation	4	3.75	3.50
Individualized Consideration	4	3.25	3.75
Grand Mean		*3.50*	*3.75*
Transactional Subscales	12		
Contingent Reward	4	3.50	3.50
Management by Exception - Active	4	2.75	3.30
Management by Exception – Passive	4	0.50	0.50
Grand Mean		*2.25*	*2.43*
Passive-Avoidance Subscale	4		
Laissez – faire	4	0.25	0.00
Grand Mean		0.25	0.00

Note: Scale 0=not at all, 1=once in a while, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, 4=frequently, if not always

Principal's also responded to the PIMRS survey (50 items) for school leaders in order to provide a perspective on their instructional leadership behavior. The responses from the items were combined and correlated with the 10 leadership behaviors in three subscales: Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate. The results of this part of the analysis are reported in Table 16. In this survey, respondents were to use a rating that ranged from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).

Table 16

Comparative Subscales Mean on PIMRS - Principal's Self Perception

Element	Items	School A (N = 2)	School C (N = 2)	Aggregate (N = 2)
Dimension 1: Defining the School Mission	10	4.8	4.2	4.5
Function 1A: Frames the School's Goals	5	5.0	4.6	4.8
Function 1B: Communicates the School School's Goals	5	4.6	3.8	4.2
Dimension 2: Managing the Instructional Program	15	3.9	4.2	4.1
Function 2A: Supervises & Evaluation Instruction	5	3.8	4.0	3.9
Function 2B: Coordinates the Curriculum	5	4.2	4.6	4.4
Function 2C: Monitors Student Progress	5	3.8	4.0	
				3.9
Dimension 3: Developing the School Learning Climate	25	3.9	3.7	
Function 3A: Protects Instructional Time	5	4.0	4.6	3.8
Function 3B: Maintain High Visibility	5	5.0	3.6	4.3
Function 3C: Provides Incentives for Teachers	5	3.4	3.6	4.3
Function 3D: Promotes Professional Development	5	3.6	3.8	3.5
Function 3E: Provides Incentives for Learning	5	3.6	3.0	3.7
				3.8

Note: Scale: 1 = almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = almost always

Notably, in reviewing the details from the mean scores for the subscales of the instructional leadership behaviors as measured by the PIMRS, the principals from both schools perceived their instructional leadership behaviors similarly. In reviewing the aggregate mean for each of the three subscales, the subscale "Defining the School Mission" received the highest rating and principals indicated the subscale "Developing the School Learning Climate" ranked as the least practiced behavior. Also interesting is the cumulative rating of the functions Frames the

School Goals (*M* = 4.8) in Dimension One and Coordinates the Curriculum (*M* = 4.4) in

Dimension 2 having the highest scores. Also, both principals rank Protects the Instructional Time

(*M* = 3.5) in Dimension Three the lowest as a leadership behavior engaged in the least.

The second sub-question sought to discover the teacher's perceptions of their principal's

leadership style and behavior as measured by the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership

behavior as measured by the PIMRS. For the MLQ-5x, there were a total of 50 participants who

completed the survey. There were 32 participants for School A, with 29 (91%) valid scores for

School A, and 17 teachers and one assistant principal who participated at School C with 17 (94%)

valid scores. The information in Table 17 provides the results of the teacher's perception of their

principal's leadership style indicating observed behavior as more aligned with transformational,

transactional, or laissez-faire style. For School A, the teachers indicated that "fairly often" they

perceived their principal's leadership style and behavior as similar to a transformational leader

(*M*=2.99). On the other hand, for School C, teachers felt their principal's leadership style is

aligned with both the transformational (*M*=1.64) and the transactional style (*M*=1.77) as

evidenced by the grand mean scores. Similar to the results from the principal's self-perception,

teachers from School A acknowledged as a visionary leader and prioritized their behavior as

aligned to the Inspirational Motivation (*M* = 3.28) subscale. In addition, the teachers rated the

subscale Idealized influence – Attributed (*M* = 3.27) as significant. They perceived their principal

as a person with the charisma and they have trust and confidence in her leadership (Avolio &

Bass, 2004). The teachers from School C did not positively highlight any particular leadership

subscale as an attribute describing their principal's leadership. The mean scores for all subscales

ranged from *M* = 1.23 to *M* = 1.78, indicating the teacher's perception is that they are unable to

associate a particular leadership of their principal. Although the means for this survey was

relatively close, the teachers indicated the least observed principal behavior was in the sub-area

Laissez-faire ($M = 1.23$).

Table 17

Comparative Subscales Mean on MLQ-5X - Teacher's Perception

Leadership Scales and Subscales	School A (N = 29)	School C (N=17)	Aggregate
Idealized Influence - Attributed	3.27	1.68	2.52
Idealized Influence – Behavior	2.90	1.75	2.33
Inspirational Motivation	3.28	1.77	2.53
Intellectual Stimulation	2.83	1.44	2.14
Individualized Consideration	2.69	1.56	2.13
Grand Mean	2.99	1.64	2.33
TRANSACTIONAL SUBSCALE			
Contingent Reward	1.77	1.78	1.78
Management by Exception - Active	1.07	1.75	1.41
Management by Exception – Passive	1.42	1.77	1.60
Grand Mean			
PASSIVE-AVOIDANT			
Laissez – faire	0.51	1.23	.87
Grand Mean	0.51	1.23	.87

Note: Scale: 0=not at all, 1=once in a while, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, 4=frequently, if not always

The PIMRS survey was also administered to the teachers of each school to ascertain their

perception of their principal's instructional leadership style. There was a total of 49 teacher

participants who completed the survey. Of the total teachers, there were 31 participants for School

A, with only 26 (84%) valid scores, and 18 (100%) teacher participants and valid scores for

School C. The results were indicated in Table 18.

Table 18

Comparative Mean Subscale on PIMRS - Teacher's Perception

Element	Items	School A (N = 26)	School C (N = 18)	Aggregate
Dimension 1: Defining the School Mission	10	3.92	3.20	3.56
Function 1A: Frames the School's Goals	5	3.97	3.46	3.72
Function 1B: Communicates the School School's Goals	5	3.87	2.94	3.41
Dimension 2: Managing the Instructional Program	15	3.81	3.27	3.54
Function 2A: Supervises & Evaluation Instruction	5	3.70	3.13	3.42
Function 2B: Coordinates the Curriculum	5	3.89	3.31	3.60
Function 2C: Monitors Student Progress	5	3.84	3.36	3.60
Dimension 3: Developing the School Learning Climate	25	3.51	2.58	3.05
Function 3A: Protects Instructional Time	5	3.41	3.16	3.29
Function 3B: Maintain High Visibility	5	3.55	2.37	2.96
Function 3C: Provides Incentives for Teachers	5	3.41	2.44	2.93
Function 3D: Promotes Professional Development	5	3.75	2.84	3.30
Function 3E: Provides Incentives for Learning	5	3.44	2.10	2.77

Note: Scale: 1 = almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = almost always

In reviewing the mean scores for the three dimensions for the observed instructional leadership of the school principal from the teacher's perspective, teachers observed: "defining the school mission" ($M = 3.56$) and "managing the instructional program" ($M = 3.54$) at about the same level. Within these categories, teachers from School C felt they nearly frequently ($M = 2.94$) observed their principal engage in communicating the school goals as compared to School A where the teachers observed this behavior more frequently ($M = 3.87$) of their principal.

Teachers from both schools were consistent in their ratings with respect to observations of their

principal's frequently "framing the school goals", School A ($M = 3.97$) and School C ($M = 3.46$).

Within the "managing the instructional program" dimension, there were two subcategories that

received the same aggregate rating scores "coordinating the curriculum" ($M = 3.60$) and

"monitors student progress ($M = 3.60$). The data also revealed the teacher's observed their

principal's instructional leadership behavior in all three dimensions ($M = 3.92$, $M = 3.81$, and $M = 3.51$) frequently. The data showed the perception from the teachers of School C regarding their

principal's instructional leadership style in Dimension Three ($M = 2.58$) was "seldom" observed.

Dimension Three speaks to the following leadership behaviors: (a) protects the instructional time,

(b) maintains high visibility, (c) provides incentives for teachers, (d) promotes professional

development, and (e) provides incentives for learning.

Sub-question three asks if the principal's perception of their leadership style behavior as

measured on the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership behavior as measured on the PIMRS

align with their teacher's perspective. The information can be found in Table 19. The aggregate

means for School A, from the principal on the MLQ-5X ranged from a high of 3.50

(Transformational Subscales) to a low of 0.25 (Passive-Avoidant Subscale or Laissez-faire). In

comparison, the teachers from School A also aligned their observation of their principal's

leadership with the transformation style ($M = 2.99$) receiving the highest mean score and the

laissez-faire style ($M = 0.51$) with the lowest observation. Conversely, the principal and teachers

representing School C have contrasting results. In analyzing the cumulative resulting mean

scores, the overall perception from the school principal indicated an alignment as a

transformational leader ($M = 3.75$), as compared to the passive-avoidant subscale ($M = 0.00$).

However, the teacher respondents expressed their leader most closely aligned with the

transactional style of leadership (*M* =1.90) and laissez-faire (*M* = 1.23) observed the least but the

behavior is observed once in a while.

Table 19

Principal's Self Perception and Teacher's Perception on MLQ-5X

Transformational Subscales	School A Principal (*M*)	School A Teacher (*M*)	School B Principal (*M*)	School B Teacher (*M*)
Idealized Influence - Attributed	3.50	3.27	3.75	1.76
Idealized Influence - Behavior	3.25	2.90	3.75	1.75
Inspirational Motivation	3.75	3.28	4.00	1.77
Intellectual Stimulation	3.75	2.83	3.50	1.44
Individualized Consideration	3.25	2.69	3.75	1.56
Grand Mean	*3.50*	*2.99*	*3.75*	*1.66*
TRANSACTIONAL SUBSCALES				
Contingent Reward	3.50	2.86	3.50	2.15
Management by Exception - Active	2.75	1.77	3.30	1.79
Management by Exception – Passive	0.50	1.07	0.50	1.75
Grand Mean	*2.25*	*1.90*	*2.43*	*1.90*
PASSIVE-AVOIDANT				
SUBSCALE	0.25	0.51	0.00	*1.23*
Laissez – faire	0.25	*0.51*	*0.00*	1.23
Grand Mean				

Note: Scale:0=not at all, 1=once in a while, 2=sometimes,3=fairly often, 4=frequently, if not always

In analyzing the individual leadership areas on the MLQ-5X, the school principal of School A identified more closely with both the inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation ($M = 3.75$) and almost not at all with the laissez-faire leadership style ($M = 0.25$). The teachers from School A similarly ranked inspirational motivation ($M = 3.28$) and idealized influence – attributed ($M = 3.27$) as frequently observed behaviors and laissez-faire ($M = 0.51$) observed once in a while. For School C, the principal's responses ranged from a high of 4.00 (inspirational motivation) to a low of 0.00 (laissez-faire). On the other hand, the cumulative individual scores for the teachers School C did not align. The behavior observed most often is the Contingent Reward ($M = 2.15$), within the transactional style of leadership and a laissez-faire style ($M = 1.23$) observed the least.

The principals from both schools rated themselves higher than their teachers on the instructional leadership dimensions within the PIMRS. For School A, the aggregate mean from the principal ranged from 4.80 (Dimension One: Defining the School Mission) to a low of 3.92 (Dimension Three: Developing the School Learning Climate). For the teachers, the mean ranged from 3.92 (Dimension One: Defining the School Mission) to 3.51 (Dimension Three: Developing the School Learning Climate). The aggregate mean score for the principal of School C ranged from 4.70 (Dimension One: Defining the School Mission) to 3.72 (Dimension Three: Developing the School Learning Climate). On the contrary, the teacher's signified two dimensions nearly equally. The highest score of 3.27 (Dimension Two: Managing the Instructional Program) as well as 3.20 (Dimension One: Defining the School Mission) to a low of 2.58 (Developing the School Learning Climate).

Overall, the perceptions of the principals and their teachers in two of the three leadership dimensions significantly differed as evidenced by the difference in the aggregate means (Dimension One: Defining the School Mission $M = 0.41$; Dimension Three: Developing the

School Learning Climate $M = .57$). Principals and teachers reported more similar levels of

observed principal behaviors in Dimension Two: Managing the Instructional Program where the

difference in the combined mean scores ($M = .13$) between both Principals and all teachers.

Table 20

Principal's Self-Perception and Teacher's Perception on PIMRS

Element	School A Principal ($N = 1$)	School A Teacher ($N = 29$)	School A Aggregate Mean	School C Principal ($N = 1$)	School C Teacher ($N = 18$)	School C Aggregate Mean	Aggregate Mean $\triangle$
Dimension 1: Defining the School Mission	4.80	3.92	4.36	4.70	3.20	3.95	0.41
Function 1A: Frames the School's Goals	5.00	3.97	4.49	4.60	3.46	4.03	0.46
Function 1B: Communicates the School School's Goals	4.60	3.87	4.24	4.80	2.94	3.87	0.37
Dimension 2: Managing the Instructional Program	3.93	3.81	3.87	4.20	3.27	3.74	0.13
Function 2A: Supervises & Evaluation Instruction	3.80	3.70	3.75	4.00	3.13	3.57	0.18
Function 2B: Coordinates the Curriculum	4.20	3.89	4.05	4.60	3.31	3.96	0.05
Function 2C: Monitors Student Progress	3.80	3.84	3.82	4.00	3.36	3.68	0.14
Dimension 3: Developing the School Learning Climate	3.92	3.51	3.72	3.72	2.58	3.15	0.57
Function 3A: Protects Instructional Time	4.00	3.41	3.71	4.60	3.16	3.88	0.17
Function 3B: Maintain High Visibility	5.00	3.55	4.28	3.60	2.37	2.99	1.29
Function 3C: Provides Incentives for Teachers	3.40	3.41	3.41	3.60	2.44	3.02	0.39
Function 3D: Promotes Professional Developmen	3.60	3.75	3.68	3.80	2.84	3.33	0.35
Function 3E: Provides Incentives for Learning	3.60	3.44	3.52	3.00	2.10	2.55	0.97

Note: Scale: 1 = almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = almost always

Experiences of School Personnel in Urban Inner-City Communities

This phenomenological study focused on understanding the experiences of principals who serve in urban inner-city communities based on lived experiences. The qualitative approach was essential to analyzing the second research question that seeks to understand how principals utilize the key factors characteristics and qualities of an urban leader, leadership style, instructional leadership, inner-city urban community, and political influences to improve school effectiveness in the urban inner-city elementary school. To address this question, three sub-research questions were developed and the resulting data from a journal log maintained by the principals and interviews involving principals, assistant principals, and teachers from two inner-city elementary schools were analyzed in response to the question.

The use of a journal log maintained by the principal was completed and analyzed to gather the activities they engaged in daily. While principals were asked to complete a five-day log and to record all activities in 30-minute increments, unfortunately, they were only able to submit logs for four of the five days, as one day during the week was a national holiday. Also, the principal from School C submitted logs, however, they were incomplete and difficult to read. Thus, the analysis will consist of information from the logs submitted by the principal of School A.

The list of activities from each day was disaggregated and categorized under the four key areas to determine the frequency of engagement in the identified areas. The area of Leadership Style and Behavior was not included in the analysis of the journal logs because this leadership function speaks to the "how" of the leader's work and not to the types of activities the leader takes part in. Moreover, one-to-one and focus group in-depth interviews were conducted using the protocols outlined in Chapter III of this study. The interviews consisted of 12 questions (Appendix C and Appendix D). In some cases, clarifying questions were asked to support

comprehension or elaborate to acquire specific details of the participant response. As an example, during the principal interview, the question asked, "how would you describe your School A to an individual unfamiliar with your school?" The principal responded, "School A is a place where you can feel safe, secure, and be able to expand your learning". The interviewer asked, "Are you referring to both students and teachers"? Another example, the interviewer asked the question, "How important do you feel the five key factors are to improving student achievement and are there other factors that you would add?" The principal responded,

> I think all of the areas are important. I think the one area I might add, and I'm not really
>
> sure how to characterize it…would be the support of staff and teachers.   The interviewer
>
> replied it's almost to me, in a way, like a teacher attitude… Do you think like maybe
>
> [like] belief system?

The researcher currently supervises the principals of both schools and to minimize any possible threats to internal validity used three non-biased individuals who served as an interviewer and two additional persons to record conversations during the interviews. All interviews were audiotaped and the responses were compared and validated through the use of the manual scripts along with the audio recordings. "Gotranscript", a transcription company headquartered in Edinburgh, Scotland, transcribed the audio recordings. Interview analysis included coding of all data to identify emerging categories and overall inter-relational themes regarding principal leadership in inner-city urban elementary schools. The qualitative findings are provided below and Chapter Five will offer a discussion of the research findings.

The Impact of the Key Factors on School Effectiveness

The second research question asked, "How do principals utilize the five key areas improve school effectiveness in the urban inner-city elementary school?" There were three sub-questions developed to answer the lead question. Principals, assistant principals, and teachers from the two school sites were asked 13 questions to gather their ideas and opinions relating to the five key areas of the study and their impact on school improvement via one-to-one and focus group interviews. To ensure fidelity of the interview responses, the researcher analyzed the answers by first reading the responses from the participants for alignment to the question. The second read was to allow inquiry and comprehension of their response, and the final read was to streamline the information by combining the data into comprehensible clusters by the school. All assistant principal responses were combined with the responses of the school principal to get a more comprehensive leadership perspective. Four themes were extracted and compared to determine similarities and differences between schools. Four themes emerged from the interviews: (a) the school community severely impacts the principal's decision-making towards school improvement, (b) teacher "voice" impacts reform efforts, (c) the principal's style of leadership influences teacher commitment, and (d) political/district influences can limit reform efforts.

Administrators Experiences in the Urban Inner-City Setting

The first sub-question asked, what are the administrator's perceptions of the key factors and their importance to successfully implementing reform strategies? The purpose of this question was to gain an understanding of the leadership action and decision-making related to the key areas in improving school effectiveness. Seven interview questions (questions two, three, five, seven, eight, and nine) directly addressed the key areas of the study.

Interview question two asked the administrative participants to identify the qualities and characteristics needed to be an effective principal at the school site. Collectively, the

administrators indicated the principal would need to be transformative, patient, flexible, have a clear vision, be a strong instructional leader, be charismatic, and is understanding of the issues of poverty within the community and the role the school plays as a result of these issues. One leader stated,

> I definitely think you have to be transformative because here, the community relies on the school for a lot…. When you have a family who is having domestic violence issues and the mom ran to us and said look, I did call the police but they're not showing up to my house because of where we live but I know if you call the police, they'll come.

Another administrator said, "they [the parents] rely on us a lot and we provide a lot of resources". And finally, one leader stated,

> It has to be someone who is a charismatic leader because it's a tough school and so I think the teachers have to be met with the energy that we can do it because when you're driving past every prostitute and then come try to teach and when you've got gangbangers hopping the fence because they're trying to run from another gangbanger, you have to be a leader who can be calm in the face of all of that and still go and meet with your staff and say, here are our challenges, here's what we need to do.

Interview question three asked the administrators what they considered to be the most effective leadership style (authoritative, transformative, or laissez-faire) for this school. All agreed that the most effective leadership style would be transformative, however, leaders from School A felt the school would need someone whose style is representative of a mix of transformative and authoritative. One participated mentioned, "I would definitely say the transformative leader. I notice that for staff if they don't feel they're a part of the decision, it's an automatic push back". Another participant declared,

> I really try to be transformative. But sometimes, transformative doesn't work and you
>
> have to go to authoritative…. So I go in between transformative and the authoritative.
>
> That's the only way that you will increase student achievement because sometimes you
>
> just have to do stuff because I say you have to do it.

In interview question five, the administrator participants discussed the principal's instructional leadership. The question asked what do you consider as the principal's role in teaching and learning. A common theme amongst all the administrators was that the principal's role was to ensure everyone is in one accord with the vision by communicating it to all stakeholders.

> A principal's role is in communicating and guiding the vision and mission, the work.
>
> They are to bring back what the district wants and make it manageable and feasible for
>
> the staff. Their role is to figure out the initiative, figure out the strategies, bring it back to
>
> the staff, find resources, implementing, and monitoring, and be sure the professional
>
> development calendar is working with stakeholders to implement and reflect to make sure
>
> we are making the moves.

> Interview question seven seeks to understand the climate of the neighborhood and to get a

sense of the administrator's outlook of whether they believed that student achievement is affected by the school's location. Overwhelmingly, the administrators felt their efforts towards academic achievement are affected by the schools' location. Both school site administrators provided parallel descriptions of their school's community. They described their school's neighborhood as exhibiting frequent trauma that includes, domestic violence, gang activity, drugs, and prostitution. Currently, they have the support of the community, local law enforcement, the district, and the elected officials. Administrators believe that students and their families are trying to survive with very little resources. In one response, the administrator said, "it's turbulent at times". Like I said, we are in between two rival gangs". Another administrator said,

We have survival issues in the community of just "what are we going to eat? Where are we going to lay our heads down?" We have homelessness. We have violence. Everyone is always on guard to be robbed, or to be jumped on; it's very difficult; it's a lot that goes on here, a lot of trauma with our students and we have to work past the trauma.

An administrator mentioned,

The biggest complaint is the prostitution. They would urinate in front of the school so we had to get a gate around the campus. They solicit in front of the houses. We have three big gangs that are around us and students are completely aware of it. We have extreme poverty. Students need clothes, shoes, and food.

The effects of district policies or political influences were addressed in interview question eight. The question asked to what extent does the district policies support or hinder decisions towards improved achievements. Both schools shared thoughts around the district hiring policies and the effects the policy has on the student academic success in urban inner-city schools. An administrator declared, "You get a must-placed teacher, that requires a lot of time. They have attendance problems that take your time. In the last two years, "we have had "must-placed" teachers that were well below standards".

Another participant said,

> I think that until the district mandates that we all start from an equal or even-playing
>
> field, they can't expect for us to have the same expectations. I don't think that it's right
>
> to hold schools that have so many other issues to the same standard unless support is
>
> provided by the district to match that [expectation].

Interview question nine asked the administrators to consider all key areas and discuss attributes from each area that could explain their school's low performance as compared to other neighboring schools with higher achievement scores. There were three common themes that surfaced during the discussion. First, principals shared divisions between the teaching staff. One leader expressed, her teachers were transferred from neighboring schools, when her new school opened five years ago and she observed the teachers naturally formed groups among each other because they were familiar with each other from their previous work site and a lot of her time is focused on building collaborative structures needed to move the school forward. Both schools also reported concerns with the existence of too many policies and the lack of resources to support the implementation of the policies from the district.

One administrator explained, "There are pockets within pockets [in South Los Angeles]. No school is the same. There are different things that happen at schools that alter your school climate a little bit". The discussion concluded by everyone agreeing that the district needs to understand the plight of schools in the inner-city and that they necessitate additional resources that other school may not require.

Teacher's Perceptions of Principal's Leadership

The second research sub-question seeks to understand the teacher's perspectives of the principal's leadership in the five key areas that would affect school effectiveness in urban inner-city elementary schools. Similar to the coding guidelines used to understanding and disaggregate the contents provided by the school administrators during their interview, the researcher again analyzed the answers by first reading all responses for alignment to the question for the teacher interview. Another read was completed to allow for reflection and comprehension of their responses, and the final read was to streamline the information into clusters for the participant groups at each school. Themes were extracted and compared to determine similarities and differences between the two teacher groups.

A systematic sampling method was used to identify teacher participants selected for the focused group interview. Thirty-one teachers participated in the survey portion at School A and 18 participants participated at School C. Numerical information is located in Table 9. To maintain a balance in the number of participants for the interview, the researcher invited every third teacher for the focus group interview at School A and every other teacher from 18 eligible participants for the focus group at School C. In total, there were nine teachers' members from both school sites at the two interviews. The teachers were asked the same questions as their administrators during the interview. Question two, three, five, seven, eight, and nine directly solicited information related to the key areas in the study.

Interview question two asked the teachers to discuss the qualities and characteristics needed to be an effective principal at their school site. Overall, the teachers revealed the importance of their principal having an open mind, visible, sensitive to the staff, approachable and inspiring. Many sited the difficulties in maintaining parent involvement throughout the year at their school and felt the principal needed to be the "face of the school". A teacher stated, "Here,

you have to be a Principal that is out there and as mentioned [by others participant] and present. Out there in the face of the school and really be that kind of "hand-shaker". One teacher discussed the principal should be aware of what the children need. In particular, the importance of children having multiple opportunities to be rewarded throughout the year, in particular children of low-income poverty-stricken areas. One teacher participant mentioned,

> I really feel that the principal has to be very visible, and visible meaning walk through
>
> regularly in our classrooms. Not necessarily to observe us as teachers, but also to get to
>
> meet the kids because I think having that relationship, getting to know who is who, not
>
> only the kids in trouble but when the kid who is doing something positive and good in the
>
> school and in the classroom.

Interview question three solicited the teacher's thoughts on which leadership style of the principal would be the most effective at their school, transformative, authoritative, or laissez-faire. Nearly all of the teacher participants responded the transformative style of leadership would be best. One teacher compared the transformative style of leadership with her understanding of team building and mentioned,

> I would also say transformative because this is the description of team building, and this
>
> is what it takes to raise student success. It's getting people on board, having them have a
>
> say, so that feel like they have a voice—their decisions and their ideas are valued but also
>
> because they are the ones working directly with students.

The remaining participants thought the most effective style of leadership for the school would be a mixture of all three styles and recognized the importance of sometimes having to make an executive decision. The respondent advised,

> I would say transformative but also with the little bit of authoritative and a teeny bit of
>
> laissez-faire. Transformative, definitely, you want to feel like you have input and that

your voice is heard and that's really important if there's a meeting or whatever that

everybody does get a chance to talk and have their ideas considered. But sometimes you

just have to make an executive decision that just has to be done.

The next interview question specifically related to the key areas asked the teachers to offer an

opinion on the principal's role in improving teaching and learning. There were two themes

regarding the principal's role emerged from the responses from this question. Several discussions

centered on the first theme related to the significance of being an encouraging and motivating

leader in addition to the second theme of building a community of stakeholders. One of the

participants stated,

I think the role of the principal is to encourage and to motivate people to want to learn

more, to expose us or expose the children to a different program or different approaches,

or strategies. To have us see the different approaches to teaching or different program so

that we can be knowledgeable in order to help our kids in this community.

Teachers also commented on the principal responsibility of creating a collaborative learning

culture. Specifically, "I think that her role is to make sure the community is a working

community so that everyone gets along, works well together and shares those strengths".

Similar to the responses from the administrators, the reactions from the teachers to

question seven were very consistent. Interview question seven asked, how would you

characterize the climate of your neighborhood community and whether the principal's efforts in

guiding the schools towards academic achievement is affected by the school's location. Teachers

agreed that student achievement is affected by the school's location. In both interviews, teachers

discussed the activities in the community such as frequent acts of violence, drug use and

distribution, physical fighting, the disenfranchisement of parent involvement and their lack of

value for education, limited resources, and the generational effect of gang involvement. The

consensus among the teachers was these issues within the community have a significant effect on the learning culture and student achievement. A teacher stated, "Just the violence that's happening around it definitely affects the kids. It definitely affects them 100%. Yes, the community does affect the achievement of the school". One teacher reflected on her role as a teacher at her current site to that at her previous school. She said,

> I would say yes, only because I also feel as a teacher, it has more of an impact, so, its got to have an impact as a principal. Your presence I think, matters more for our student success. By presence, I mean not just physical, but your presence really matters a lot more to the success of these kids because they don't have it at home.

Another discussed of a recent training at the school on the exposure to trauma. "There are studies where it [trauma] affects their learning. Definitely. I bet if you went on Meghan's list or Meghan's law and you put in an address, there would be so many things popping up around here". Interestingly, there were a few veteran teachers who expressed a different opinion about their neighborhood. One commented,

> A lot of people in our [neighborhood] community are caring, considering the circumstances. They look out for me in the 20 years I've worked here. They come and get me if something is wrong. They come and help me in my classroom if I ask. I think they have experienced negative relationships with school or no school and therefore they are very hesitant about their involvement. And once you explain to them what you need, … they're happy to accommodate.

In the administrators as well as the teacher's interviews, both groups highlighted the need for more parental involvement in the school.

Question eight asks for the teachers to consider the extent that district policies support or hinder their principal's decision-making towards academic achievement. At School A, the

teachers began to discuss the budget crisis and the limited resources available for teachers and students as a result of the reduction of funds. They discussed the need for technology in the classrooms. The discussion shifted from the budget to the Suspension Policy where students can no longer be suspended for "willful defiance". One teacher announced, "I think the district's policy on suspension hinders. I'm not saying suspending is the answer, but we're not given an alternative. Teachers at School C also held a discussion regarding the Suspension Policy. Both groups expressed the belief that the new policy hinders staff authority with students. As stated in the interview,

> I know that it comes from the Board of Education where they decided we can't suspend … but kids are not afraid anymore. They want to do whatever they want to do. They feel that they can do whatever because they know that they're not going to get suspended. I think the principal's hands are tied in that situation.

The responses from teachers to question nine were very limited from both participant groups. The question asks, consider the five key areas of the study what are some of the attributes in each of the areas that could explain your school's underperformance as compared to other schools in the South Los Angeles area. Teachers of School A again discussed the importance of parent involvement in schools to help support their child's education. One teacher reflected on experiences of her last work location, "One difference I noticed in terms of community is that parent involvement and the fact that when I would speak to the parents of a need, there was actually something done about it. Right here, I get very minimal." Teachers at School C spent a few minutes discussing the importance of having a talented school principal that has strong instructional leadership skills and someone who does not always exercise the authoritative "top-down" style of leadership in order to build staff culture.

When given the opportunity to provide any additional information that might be helpful in explaining issues affecting principal's successful implementation of reform, comments and discussions from the teacher participants centered on the budget crisis and the impact to achievement at their school sites. As an example, teachers felt the reduction of the budget has resulted in safety concerns with personnel to supervise the students while playing on the playground. A teacher expressed concern with not "having people outside as adults caring for those kids and making sure that they [the kids] are doing the right thing".

The final sub-question in the qualitative analysis was intended to identify the actual types of leadership practices elementary principal frequently undertake. The researcher used the journal entries to capture the description of the activities the principals engage in on a daily basis and align these behaviors with the key areas in the study. A completed log for the first half of the day for School A can be found in Table 21.

Table 21

Daily Principal's Log

Characteristics and Qualities of Urban Leaders; Aspects of Leadership Style & Behavior; Instructional Leadership; Urban School Community and Political Influences

Daily Principal's Log

Name: School A   **Day/Date: May 30, 2017**

Time	Activity – Reason for Activity	Comment
8:00 – 8:30 am	Substitute Coverage Check Yard duty – Safety Success Tickets – Pass out –SWPB Front of school traffic- Safety Morning Assembly – SWPB Meeting with parent – Regarding death of a parent and child custody. Escort Student 1. back to class	
8:31 – 9:00 am	Attendance Awards Assembly – Perfect Attendance. 10 min before each recess. Meet with PSA Check in with PSW – SSPT Reorganization – classes next year	
9:01 – 9:30 am	Conference with parent of Student 2., Student 2, Student 3 Grandmother passed away previous week. Referred for counseling and Healthy Start for support. SBAC Check – In 5th grade Email to Personnel Commission Campus aides out – Find coverage for yard first recess	Family needs help for unexpected death. Unable to bury.
9:31 – 10:00 am	Touch base with A- Team Walk 2nd Grade – Classroom Visitations Handle Parent dispute with staff member (plastic bags) Parent concern 6th grade graduation.	Why do certain students get to graduate?
10:01 – 10:30 am	Behavior Time out – Kinder student 6th Grade student – upset that another 6th grade student wanted to fight after she called her a name.	Spoke with student
10:31 – 11:00 am	Go over budget to see if there is money for PD for teachers in summer. Make sure Good Receipts are completed. Student behavior – Student 4	
11:01 – 11:30 am	Teacher calls office for support. Student in her classroom is saying that he wants to kill himself. Principal calls Crisis Team Mtg to evaluate student. Informed Psy. SocialWorker (PSW) -Incident Reporting System PSW	Call to parent regarding student. Low to no threat. Watching Netflix "13 Reasons"

Principals were asked to maintain a log of actions in 30-minute intervals for one week. They

were provided instructions and a template for completing the recording sheet. The outcomes from

School A and School C are indicated in Table 22.

School Principal Leadership Practices

The results indicated that 64% of the principal's daily activities were classified in the area

of characteristics and qualities of an effective leader. According to Meador, 2014, an effective

school leader is one who models expected behavior, is well respected, is seen as a problem solver

who can make difficult decisions, is an exceptional listener, a visionary, and ultimately holds

others accountable. Thus, in more recent times, the characteristics and qualities of an effective

leader are usually identified as a list of expected principal behaviors or actions. Some of the

principal activities listed in this category were substitute coverage check, playground supervision,

meeting with personnel, communication with parent regarding academic progress, budget

analysis, facilitating routine morning assembly, responding to emails, attending a parent

workshop, and speaking to maintenance regarding facilities concerns. The areas relating to the

urban school community and political or district influences ranked 14% respectively. The

following activities were identified as actions under the urban school community category. These

include, but not limited to meeting with various stakeholders regarding such student issues as a

death within a student's family, child custody issues, the need for counseling services, behavior

concerns, removal from the home, and health and wellness checks. Activities categorized under

political/district influences were activities such as updating the district reporting system,

completing administrative reports, contacting the district office for support, personnel matters,

attending an administrative meeting and ensuring completion of state and district assessments.

The final category for analysis is instructional leadership. The data indicates that 8% of the

principal's day is spent on instructional leadership activities.

Table 22

Principal's Log Summary Data from School A and School C

Days	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	
Key Areas		Occur	rences		Aggregate (*M*) Estimates
Characteristics & Qualities of Urban Leader	37 (59 %)	45 (71%)	32 (62%)	27 (63%)	64%
Instructional Leadership	8 (12%)	3 (5%)	5 (10%)	3 (7%)	8%
Urban School Community	13 (21%)	6 (10%)	7 (13%)+	5 (12%)	14%
Political /District Influences	5 (8%)	9 (14%)	8 (15%)	8 (18%)	14%
Grand Total	63 (100%)	63 (100%)	52 (100%)	43 (100%)	

Note: +Denotes Rounding Error

Summary

Chapter four examined the relationships between principal leadership practices given the existing key factors and the implementation of reform efforts in low-income urban inner-city elementary schools in South Los Angeles. The perceived leadership style of leadership and the instructional leadership practices were identified using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-5X survey and the Principal's Instructional Management Rating Scale survey. In addition, daily practices of the principal were captured using a journal log where principals recorded their activities in 30-minute intervals for four days. These activities were then coded into four

categories: (a) characteristics and qualities of a leader, (b) instructional leadership, (c) urban school community and culture, (d) political/district influences. Focus group and one-to-one interviews were used as a guide to understanding the perspectives of principals, assistant principals and teachers on reform efforts at their school sites based on the key factors in the study.

The quantitative results of the study indicated that principals from School A and School B self-reported their leadership style most like the transformational style of leadership. Results from the teacher's perspectives differ by school site. Teachers from School A perceived their principal as most similar to the transformational leadership style however, teachers from School B indicated their principal most closely aligns with both the transformation and the transactional (authoritative) styles of leadership.

During the qualitative analysis of the research, four themes emerged from the interviews: (a) the school community severely impacts the principal's decision-making towards school improvement, (b) teacher voice impacts reform efforts, (c) the principal's style of leadership influences teacher commitment and work ethic, (d) political/district influences can limit reform efforts. In addition, the results of the principal's daily practices showed that 64% of the principal's activities are classified under the category of characteristics and qualities of an urban leader, 14% as urban school community, 14% as activities influenced by the political/district, and 8% are more aligned with activities related to instructional leadership.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the study and foundational research questions are summarized, and conclusions are determined. Following the summary of the study, a discussion of the study's implications for practice and suggestions for further research are presented on this topic.

Summary of the Study

Students educated in many urban inner-city areas are underperforming, as evidenced by historical trends on state and benchmark assessments. Today, the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students continues to exist, and the academic success of the disadvantaged urban, high poverty, the inner-city student remains substandard. The focus of this study was to identify those influences within the urban inner-city school communities in South Los Angeles that impact the elementary school principal's efforts to successfully implement reform strategies that target school success and improvements in academic achievement.

As the literature suggests, the decisions and behaviors of the principal determine a school's culture and have an impact on school effectiveness (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994). The study took a look at the relationship between several critical leadership dimensions of the school principal position, based on the principal's self-perceptions and the perceptions of their teachers and assistant principals, through the lens of five key leadership areas: characteristics and qualities of an inner-city school principal, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, incidences of the inner-city community and culture, and political influences. These key areas identified in the research are matters that modern-day elementary principals frequently confront that may shape the implementation of reform efforts and ultimately, student achievement, particularly in urban inner-city public schools.

A combination of Fullan and Quinn's Coherence framework (2015) and the PELP coherence framework by Childress et al (2011) served as the theoretical framework. This study

was based on the idea that achieving schools have principals that influence the instructional and operational programs but takes into consideration that educators in some of the poorest neighborhoods in South Los Angeles "face difficult challenges working through issues often associated with poverty: crime and violence, drugs, physical and mental abuse, neglect, teen pregnancy, and disengaged communities" (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016, p. 239). More importantly, the study validated the need for excellent leadership, a collaborative mission, equitable resources, and district support in order for schools serving low socioeconomic families in urban inner-city communities to reach higher academic standards.

This study explored the dynamics that urban inner-city principals confront daily and how those encounters impact reform efforts in elementary schools in South Los Angeles. It included a total of 52 participants, two principals, two assistant principals, and 48 classroom teachers, from two low-performing elementary schools located less than three miles from the 1992 Civil Unrest in Los Angeles, an underserved impoverished community where the aftermath of the well-known civil disturbance continues. Of the 48 total teacher participants, one teacher survey was eliminated due to incomplete response information. Both schools scored in the bottom 5% on the 2015 SBAC, California's annual academic summative assessment, which is based on a set of fixed grade level standards and used to determine a student's academic progress each year (CDE, 2015).

A sequential transformative mixed-method research design was utilized where both quantitative and qualitative approaches occurred consecutively, and all information was weighted equally to address the research questions. The research questions were created and tested through the use of two Likert-style surveys, participant interviews of administration and teachers consisting of 12 and 13 questions, respectively, and journal logs maintained by the principal that listed the daily activities in 30-minute intervals for four consecutive days. This study offered a

discussion of the results, included in chapter four, of the principal's leadership style from the

MLQ-5X survey (Appendix A), the principal's instructional leadership from the PIMRS survey

(Appendix B), the principal's leadership practices as evidenced from the journal logs, and

participant interviews of principals, assistant principals, and teachers to address the constraints

related to the five key areas and their impact on the implementation of reform efforts by the

principal. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency for all survey items

within each subscale. All reliability coefficients were in the acceptable range, with the exception

of the "individualized consideration" in the MLQ-5X survey. The specific research questions for

this study included:

1. What effect do the principal leadership practices, based on the principal's leadership

style as measured on the MLQ-5X, and instructional leadership practices, as measured by

the PIMRS, have on academic school success?

a. What are the principal's perceptions of their leadership style behavior scores as

measured on the MLQ-5X and instructional leadership behavior scores as measured on

the PIMRS?

b. What are the teacher's perceptions of their principal's leadership style behavior

scores as measured on the MLQ-5X and instructional leadership behavior scores as

measured on the PIMRS?

c. Does the principal's perception of their leadership style behavior scores as

measured on the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership behavior scores as

measured on the PIMRS align with the teacher's perspective?

2. How do principals utilize the key factors "characteristics and qualities of an effective

school leader," "leadership style and behavior," "instructional leadership," "inner-city

urban community," and "political influences" to improve school effectiveness in the urban inner-city elementary school?

    a. What are the principal's perceptions of the key factors and their importance to successfully implementing reform strategies?

    b. What are the teacher's perceptions of the impact of the key factors on improving school-wide achievement leadership practices?

    c. How do the principal's leadership practices align with the key areas?

Each survey included an open-ended question to allow the participants an opportunity to include information not asked in the survey or during the interview. The participants provided no additional information. The data collected from the survey instruments were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics. The SPSS version 24 and a method of coding using NVIVO 11 software programs were used to determine the results.

Discussion of the Findings

School leadership has become a focus of educational policy and an avenue for school turnaround as a result of academic underperformance. It plays a pivotal role in improving overall school success and in a school setting, the principal's style and instructional leadership are indicative of their beliefs and the school learning climate.

The study results show, urban education suffers from many problems, but worse among them is the spread of dense areas of poverty, where multiple social ills converge. The correlates of poverty-poor health, inadequate housing, high crime rates, single-parent families, [and] substance abuse create an environment in which heroic efforts are necessary in order to sustain aspirations for the future (Ravitch, 1998, p. 3).

The goal of this mixed-method phenomenological study was to investigate the influences faced by the current elementary principal that affect their reform efforts. This section discusses the finding for each of the research questions.

Research Question One

The first research question seeks to understand the influences of the principal's style of leadership and instructional leadership practices on implementing reform strategies towards school improvement. Four sub-questions were designed to address this question.

The first sub-question examined the principal's perceptions of their leadership style as measured on the MLQ-5x and their instructional leadership methods as measured on the PIMRS. The data from the MLQ – 5X was used to identify the principal as demonstrating leadership similar to that of transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire style.

Using the mean scores from the survey ratings, the findings resulting from this sub-question indicate principal's felt they were most closely aligned with was the transformational style of leadership. According to Taylor and La Cava (2011), transformational leadership uses a collaborative approach and focuses on building the capacity of staff to work collectively towards accomplishing their goals.

Within the transformational subscale, the highest mean score from both principals was in the area of "inspirational motivation". Leaders who frequently engage in this behavior are generally more inspiring. Inspirational motivation measures the degree to which you provide a vision and help others to focus on their work and expresses confidence that goals will be achieved (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

It is imperative that principals have a sense of understanding of instructional leadership. Principal's responsibilities include being involved in the process of classroom instruction. They must be aware of the research based-strategies that will elevate school-wide academic

achievement. According to Childress, et al (2011), improvements to student learning is accomplished through improving the instructional core, raise the level of content, increase teacher knowledge and skills, and increase student engagement. Principals were asked to self-evaluate their instructional leadership style using the PIMRS survey. This instrument focused on 10 leadership functions organized into three dimensions and it identifies principal performance levels based on leadership behaviors. The subscales consist of: frames the school's goals, communicates the school's goals, supervises and evaluation instruction, coordinates the curriculum, monitors student progress, protects instructional time, maintain high visibility, provides incentives for teachers, promotes professional development and provides incentives for learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The results of the PIMRS based on the principal's perceptions indicate they perceived themselves as frequently demonstrating seven of the ten leadership subscales. This is significant, particularly for principals in schools located in low-income communities, as they are aware of the importance of engaging in instructional leadership behaviors at their school and the priority of increasing student achievement. The top two mean scores from both principal ratings were in the subscales "frames the school goals" and "coordinates the curriculum". "Frames the school's Goals" speaks to the principal's responsibility in identifying the goals or focus areas. "Instructionally effective schools generally have a clearly defined mission or set of goals for student achievement" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 221). The second area that received a high average score is "coordinates the curriculum". In this era of standards-based and accountability, it is imperative for principals to review data for decision-making and planning, development and monitor the delivery of content, and offer focused professional development to increase content knowledge and refine pedagogical approaches used in the classroom. However, in order for schools to have sustained and continuous academic growth, teachers must be a cooperative. They

must be a willing participant in the instructional plan and be able to carry out the goals of the plan in their classrooms. Unfortunately, for both school principals, "provides incentives for teachers" received the lowest mean score. According to Hallinger & Murphy (1985), principals must understand to make the best use of both formal and informal ways of providing teachers with incentives.

The second sub-question seeks to discover the teacher's perceptions of their principal's leadership style and behavior as measured by the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership behavior as measured by the PIMRS. The question was designed to obtain insight into teacher's general perception of the principal's leadership style and is based on the assumption that teachers develop their perceptions of their principal's effectiveness based on observations of their practice. The result of the analysis of the teacher's survey on the MLQ-5X for School A mirrored the principal's perception of their leadership style as similar to the transformational subscales. Although the mean scores were considerably less than the principal's data, teachers at School A thought their leader demonstrates skills most frequently like the "inspirational motivation" and "idealized influence". Leadership qualities in these areas speak to the level of trust, faith, and respect the staff maintains of their principal and see's their principal as a role model in addition to providing a vision to support maintaining focus on the achieving the goals. The mean rating from the teachers of School C on the other hand, was slightly higher for the transactional style of leadership as an indicator of their principal's leadership style although the teacher's overall ratings were low in every leadership. According to Bass and Avolio (2004), "transactional leaders display behaviors associated with constructive and corrective transactions. Transactional leadership defines expectations and promotes performance to achieve these levels" (p. 104). This type of leader delegates responsibilities with monitoring for task completion and compliance. Within this scale, teachers rated the "contingent reward" as a style seen only sometimes but it

received the highest mean score of all nine scales. According to Bass and Avolio (2004), this style of leadership has a negative relationship with student achievement. Within this scale, leaders tend to take corrective actions quickly for being out of compliance.

The results from the teacher's perspectives of their principal's instructional leadership show the highest rating in dimension one, defining the school mission and dimension two, managing the instructional program. These areas speak to defining the school-wide instructional goals and administratively monitoring the instructional program. The data from the teachers of School A identifies their principal frequently engages in seven out of ten leadership subscales and they "sometimes" observed behaviors in the remaining three sub-scales. Within the seven leadership subscales of principal engagement, teachers rated behaviors in subscales "frames the school's goals", "coordinates the curriculum", and "communicates the school's goals" the highest. Although "protects the instructional time" and "provides incentive for teachers" received the least ratings of the total possible areas, teachers indicated observations in these areas "sometimes". Similar to the leadership dimension, the overall ratings from the teachers of School C was again slightly lower than the ratings from the teachers at School A in the instructional leadership survey. Behaviors in the subscales "frame the school's goals", "monitors student progress", and "communicates the school's goals" received the highest ratings. The ratings indicated there is a strong emphasis using testing as a measure of academic success. Here, tests are used to diagnose student's strengths and weaknesses as well as to evaluate the changes needed in the instructional program (Hallinger, 2004).

Sub-question three asks if the principal's perception of their leadership style and behavior as measured on the MLQ-5X and their instructional leadership behavior as measured on the PIMRS align with their teacher's perspective. The overall results of the principal's style of leadership based on their self-perception and the perception of their teachers at School A were

aligned. Both sensed the principal's leadership style as more transformational than transactional or passive-avoidant. According to Hallinger (2004), transformational leaders provide a positive school culture for their constituents and encourage individual voice and the freedom to use their own talents to develop solutions. Unfortunately, the results for the style of leadership from the principal and teachers of School C were not aligned. The principal's perception of their style of leadership was similar to a transformational leader while the teachers observed more of a transactional leader. In addition, the differences in the teacher's rating scores at both schools were lower than the principal's ratings. Also, the overall scores from the teachers at School C were lower than the scores of the teachers at School A indicating the principal's leadership behavior is "seldom" observed.

The lead question seeks to determine the effect of the principal's leadership style and instructional leadership practices based on the participant perceptions on the MLQ-5X and the PIMRS have on academic school success. Education today mandates the need for achievement data to determine the quality and effectiveness of a child's education and ultimately school success. Thus, the goal of any school is to raise test scores. Numerous studies have confirmed that it is no secret that teachers directly influence student achievement scores and the principal's role, therefore, is to support teacher improvements and the academic performance of their school as evidenced by multiple test scores. For low-achieving schools, the task of increasing student achievement is complex. One of the ways principals can influence school success is through the combination of a principal's leadership style and their instructional leadership. Leithwood, et al (2004), reminds us of the two essential objectives critical to any organization's effectiveness specifies assisting schools to set a defensible set of directions or the instructional leadership and how members are influenced to move in that direction or the leadership style.

Research Question Two

The second research question seeks to understand "How do principals utilize the five key factors impact school effectiveness in the urban inner-city elementary school?" To draw the conclusion to this question, a qualitative analysis was completed using the responses from the one-to-one and focus group interviews and the journal entries logged by a principal of their activities for four consecutive days. Daily activities were then coded under the key areas relations to principal actions. Regrettably, one school principal was unable to complete the requested logs entries. Therefore, the analysis will be based on the response from one school principal.

There were three sub-questions developed to answer this lead question. The first sub-question asked, what are the principal's and assistant principal's perceptions of the key factors and their importance to successfully implementing reform strategies? The purpose of this question was to gain an understanding of the leadership actions and decision-making based on the key areas identified in the literature from principals, assistant principal and teachers who work in low-income urban areas and the relationship to improving school effectiveness. Six of the interview questions (questions two, three, five, seven, eight, and nine) directly addressed the key areas of the study.

Characteristics and qualities of urban leaders. Over the years, factors that contribute to effective leadership have transitioned to a "laundry list" of principal "to do" items to more concrete characteristics needed to be an effective school leader. In 2013, the National Association of Elementary School Principals reported, "in general, effective principals tend to be educational visionaries; instructional curriculum leaders; assessment experts; public relations experts; budget analyst; facility managers; special program administrators; and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives" (p. 2). Principals were asked what leadership qualities and characteristics a principal ought to possess to effectively influence school

improvement. Collectively, the administrators indicated the quality and characteristics of an effective principal at their school site would need to be transformative, patient, flexible, have a clear vision, be a strong instructional leader, be charismatic, and is understanding of the issues of poverty within the community and the role the school plays as a result of these issues. These results are consistent with the findings from the 2013 National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Aspects of leadership style and behavior. The responses from the principals differed in their opinions of the style of leadership that would be the most effective. The principals were asked to consider their school community, what would you consider to be the most effective leadership style to influence student achievement. One principal indicated the transformative style would be optimum and another principal agreed that the transformative approach to leadership would be the best model "but sometimes, [the] transformative [style] doesn't work and you have to go to the authoritative". Although the research on this topic does not specifically highlight a preference of a specific style of leadership, successful school leaders must create a school vision and build a sense of commitment among staff, students, and parents (Peterson, 2002; Martin, 2009; and Wallace Foundation, 2013) which aligns itself to the transformational style of leadership.

Instructional leadership. In the efforts to be more globally competitive in education, the United States has gone through several educational transformations through standards-based and accountability with states having the freedom to develop individual grade level standards to currently having states adopt the Common Core State Standards. They were asked to reflect on what they consider as the principal's role in improving teaching and learning. In response to the discussions around instructional leadership, the reactions from the administrator participants varied. The leaders from one school spoke about the need for establishing and communicating a

vision while the second school replied of the principal being a facilitator and a role model for teachers. Conversations also included the need for principals to find resources and monitor implementation of expectations. Interestingly, the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (2015) identified four salient dimensions of instructional practices to support maximum achievement: (a) Vision, Mission and Learning-focused Culture, (b) Improvement of Instructional Practices, (c) Allocation of Resources, and (d) Management of Systems and Processes. The results demonstrate that implementation of strong instructional leadership suggests leadership behaviors in all four dimensions. Thus, the partial response acknowledgment of all four aspects of instructional may account for the school-wide student learning data.

Urban school community and culture. In response to the question, how you characterize the climate of your neighborhood community. Administrators agreed that the location of their schools affects student success. They described their school's neighborhood as having multiple challenges from poverty, violence, drugs, prostitution, and exhibiting the glorification of gang involvement. Administrators believe that students and their families are just trying to survive but have minimal resources. As a result, many of their students and families enter campus with needs that schools with limited means are unable to support. As suggested by the literature, inner-city urban schools and their communities have a multitude of issues and affect effective schooling for some students. As a result, schools are confronted with the dilemma of how to successfully ensure that students continually meet grade level standards.

Political influences. The results from the administrators relating to political and district policies that hinder a principal's efforts to implementing reform spoke to the disparity in district policies for low-income minority inner-city schools. Specifically, administrators discussed the divisiveness caused the teacher's union, lack of resource allocations particularly in the area of

mental health services, and finally the number of unqualified teachers assigned to their school sites. Administrators expressed that often, teachers assigned to their school site are inexperienced and require constant monitoring and training. The literature validates their opinions with several court cases. As an example the case known as the *Vergara v. the State of California* in 2012 or the teacher evaluation case which in essence argued that all children had a fundamental right to be educated by an effective teacher and that poor and minority students were more likely to have an ineffective teacher in their classroom than non-poor and non-minority students. It called for the elimination of teacher tenure would allow local educational agencies the option of selecting staff based on performance rather than a hire date. The premise of the case asserted that a more lenient dismissal procedure would lead to a stronger teaching force (Welner, 2015). On April 14, 2016, the California Court of Appeals upheld the long-standing teacher tenure laws (Flawed Ruling In Vergara Appeal, Time For Legislative Action, 2016)

The second research sub-question seeks to understand the teacher's perspectives of the principal's leadership in the five key areas that would affect school effectiveness in urban inner-city elementary schools.

Characteristics and qualities of urban leaders. Meador (2014) defines an effective school leader as one who models expected behavior, is well respected, is seen as a problem solver who can make difficult decisions, is an exceptional listener, a visionary, and ultimately holds others accountable. Teacher participants were asked to describe what leadership qualities and characteristics should the principal possess to effectively influence school improvement. In like manner, the results the qualitative study from the perspective of the teachers revealed the importance of their principal having similar characteristics. They believe a successful principal at their school should have an open mind and be willing to listening to others; visible to the parents, teacher, and staff; loving yet firm; approachable, inspiring and motivating. Unfortunately, the

teachers did not express attributes of a principal serving in the poverty-stricken inner-city community. One characteristic that would be important for the principal to possess is the ability to foster culturally and responsible learning as well as is able to promote a school environment that responds to diversity.

Aspects of leadership style and behavior. The results to the question of what one would consider to be the most effective leadership style of the principal that would influence increasing student achievement, resulted in virtually the entire teacher participants groups transformative style of leadership as most important. Many participants expressed they would appreciate having an input on decisions at the school site and feel it is important to have all voices heard. Interestingly, even with the assistance of the definition, teachers seem to not focus on a critical aspect of this style of leadership. As equally important as providing an avenue for constituent voice, transformative leadership addresses the leader's ability to build capacity and empower others to work collaboratively to reach the shared vision. Leaders work to ensure employees are invested in their work and they engage in work that is best for everyone (Taylor and La Cava, 2011). Working in an environment where the staff is divisive can lead to numerous unintended consequences such as teacher resistance and a climate of negativism and teacher isolation. One participant mentioned, "Education is always transforming. So, that affects her [the principal's] vision and sometimes it's out of control. It's even harder, of course [because] she has to deal with resistance". Working in these conditions could contribute to the underachievement of a school. It would be important then, for principals to focus on building a sense of school community that includes all stakeholders.

Instructional leadership. According to Harvey & Holland (2013), principals display instructional leadership when they become intimately familiar with the "technical core" of school- what is required to improve the quality of teaching and learning (p. 11). Childress, et al (2011)

describe the instructional core as the strategy for improvement grounded in the work of the three components, teacher's knowledge, student engagement, and challenging curriculum. The teachers were asked what they considered as the principal's role in improving teaching and learning. The scope of the teacher's response in defining the principal's role in teaching and learning at their school site was limited to a role of encouragement and motivation. One teacher said, "I think the role of the principal is to encourage, to motivate people to want to learn more". Another mentioned the need to "offer more professional developments for teachers so that we can grow as teachers". While the teacher's comments are important, the real work of instructional leadership calls for the principal to dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort the mechanic and details of teaching and learning in all classrooms. The essence of instructional leadership is building a cohesive learning community that involves teachers and leaders working together, sharing ideas, and assisting teachers in carrying out a researched-based curriculum that supports an appreciation for diversity and cultural differences and instructional practices that include culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy.

Urban school community and culture. Teachers were asked to discuss how they would characterize the climate of their neighborhood community. The result of their response was shocking to hear the various levels of crisis management the schools confront daily. Teachers were in total agreement that student achievement is affected by the school's location. One participant asked if the contents of the interview would be shared with district senior leadership in the hopes of acquiring additional resources for the school. In both interviews, teachers discussed the activities in the community such as the culture of poverty and the glorifying of gang involvement, frequent acts of violence, drug use and distribution, physical fighting, the disenfranchisement of parent involvement and their lack of value for education, and the limited resources in the school and within the community to support the needs of the students and their

families. One participant discussed children's exposure to prostitution and naked women. Another participant spoke about "if kids [are] always disrupting the class all day long, isn't getting the counseling services that they need. We have a Psychiatric Social Worker (PSW) two days a week. We need five PSWs five days a week. There's no accountability to the greater district system". The consensus among the teachers was these issues within the community have a significant effect on the learning culture and student achievement.

   Political influences. Teachers were asked to what extent do district policies support or hinder the principal's decision-making towards improved student achievement. The results of this analysis were there were too many policies that may cloud the judgment of the school leader. At School A, the teacher participants discussed the effect of the budget crisis and the availability of limited resources such as access to technology, counseling services, and extra-curricular activities. One teacher stated, "I wish there were more things like clubs or things for the kids to be a part of. I was just working with the kids with the ballroom dancing team and that was like out of all the fifth graders, it was only 14 of them". The big centered on the Suspension Policy where students cannot be suspended for "willful defiance" but as one teacher stated, "I don't believe that suspension is the only answer, but we need something else to do for them [students]". Sadly, the results of the analysis are in alignment with the literature. Jacob (2007) said it best in describing some of the urban inner-city communities. He indicated, "These communities are often characterized by minimal support from the home, increased mobility rates, minimal access to health care and community resources, poverty, and incalculable crime rates".

   The final sub-question in the qualitative analysis asked how does the principal's leadership align with the key areas. It was intended to identify the actual types of leadership practices elementary principals undertake on a daily basis. A four-day journal was used to capture the description of the activities that were aligned with the key areas in the study.

The results indicated more than half of the principal's daily activities were classified in the area of characteristics and qualities of an effective leader. The principal reported activities such as substitute coverage check, playground supervision, meeting with personnel, communication with parents, analyzing the school budget, facilitating routine morning assembly, responding to emails, attending parent workshops, addressing maintenance and facilities concerns. A fraction of the day is spent in the areas relating to the urban school community and political or district influences. These activities include meeting with various stakeholders regarding such student issues as a death within a student's family, child custody issues, the need for counseling services, behavior concerns, removal from the home, and health and wellness checks. Activities categorized under political/district influences were activities such as updating the district reporting system, completing administrative reports, contacting the district office for support, personnel matters, attending administrative meetings, and ensuring completion of state and district assessments. The least amount of time is in the instructional leadership area.

The goal of our educational system is to educate. However, how are children guaranteed the very best academic instruction and that teachers deliver the content knowledge necessary for student academic success if the school's instructional leaders spend only a fraction of the day of engaging and monitoring student learning activities? Clearly, there is a multitude of activities that the principal engages in that impede their focus on instruction.

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study support the continued examination of the issues affecting elementary school principal's reform efforts in the urban inner-city of South Los Angeles. This research will add to the literature that is rich in resources regarding school leadership but limited in the study of education within impoverished communities. In 1859, the Charles Dickens noted, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times…" His observation of a time far way may in

fact accurately depict present-day education (Roberson, 2011). Roberson states, "The tension between what is happening in schools and what is demanding of schools by the outside world is increasing (p. 886).

Based on this research study, the following points are recommended for practice:

1. School Principals assigned to urban inner-city schools should work towards understanding the neighborhood community including but not limited to: the effects of poverty, gang involvement, trauma, and the impact of the deprivation of health care services on the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

2. School principals assigned to urban inner-city schools should collaboratively create and work towards a vision and mission of high expectations for all stakeholders that are rooted in a sense of purpose and value for the school community and exudes a culture of caring and pride in the school.

3. School principals assigned to urban inner-city schools should exercise transformative leadership and focus on building a collaborative learning culture that celebrates diversity, where all voices are heard, and the work is focused on achieving the vision and mission statement through a shared sense of responsibility.

4. School principals assigned to urban inner-city schools should establish learning communities that include open dialogues on understanding cultural diversity, race relations, and culturally relevant pedagogy; with quality professional developments that foster collaborative relationships that promote reflection, inquiry, and sharing of researched-based best practices for language minority students.

5. District leadership should offer opportunities for school principals to reflect on professional challenges, discuss their experiences with colleagues and or a mentor for

support and guidance, and to participate in cultural sensitivity training where participants are able to reflect on their bias and understanding of race and culture.

6. District leadership should support urban inner-city schools by providing equitable resources that include counseling supports to ensure all students are educated in a safe, nurturing, and welcoming environment and staff are highly trained and qualified to support the school's mission and vision.

7. District leadership should provide guidance and assistance with aligning budget priorities with school site determined needs and priorities.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is the hope of the research that this body of knowledge extends the dearth of knowledge available on the topic of understanding factors of the urban inner-city that affect reform efforts by the school principal. Due to the limitations of this study's scope and methodology, there is a host of recommendations for further research. One suggestion is to conduct this study using additional low academic performing elementary schools to determine the alignment of the results or perhaps conduct this study using a higher performing urban inner-city elementary school to determine the alignment of the results. Another interesting study would be to conduct a quantitative study of urban inner-city elementary schools focused on components of effective leadership. Additionally, an alternative research study would be inclusive of secondary school principals to see if new aspects are revealed. Further, an interesting research to advance the educational field would be to repeat this study to include selection on urban non-inner-city schools with large enrollments of minority students to determine if perceptions would be different. I would also suggest conducting this study with different school districts both in state and out of state to determine if the results are aligned or not aligned. My final recommendation would be to replicate this study in five to ten years and conduct a trend analysis of issues affecting reform.

Conclusions

According to Leithwood, et al (2004), all current school reform efforts aim to improve teaching and learning. Some reforms, attempt to improve all schools in a district, state or county at the same time. Other reforms attempt to influence the overall approach to teaching and learning within a school but do so one school at a time. Still others focused on innovative curricula. However, they all depend on the motivation and capacities of local leadership" (p. 4). The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of principals, assistant principals, and teachers regarding the impact of reform efforts in urban inner-city elementary schools.

To obtain the quantitative data, two surveys were administered to the principals and their teachers to ascertain their perceptions of the principal's leadership style and instructional leadership. The quantitative data analysis resulted in the transformative style of leadership is most preferred and will allow stakeholder voice in decision-making. According to one leader, "A transformative leader engages all stakeholders. All stakeholders need to be engaged and be part of the vision statement and mission and all of that". The data also discovered that urban inner-city principal's instructional leadership focuses on framing the school's goals and coordinating the school curriculum and requires emphasis on developing the school's learning climate.

The qualitative data sought to obtain the perspectives from the study participants regarding the principals' efforts towards reform based on the key area: (a) characteristics and qualities of an urban leader, (b) aspects of leadership style and behavior, (c) instructional leadership, (d) urban school community and culture, (e) political/district influences. During the qualitative analysis of the research, four themes emerged from the interviews the school community severely impacts the principal's decision-making towards school improvement, the teacher quality, and buy-in impacts reform efforts, the principal's style of leadership influences teacher commitment and work ethic, the political/district influences can limit reform efforts. In

addition, the data results of the principal's daily practices showed that 64% of the principal's daily activities are classified under the category of characteristics and qualities of an urban leader, 14% as urban school community, 14% as activities influenced by the political/district, and 8% of the activities are more aligned with exercising instructional leadership.

This study is important because it contributes significantly to the existing body of literature on urban inner-city reform. It also provided recommendations for school leader practice and offered suggestions for further research. As educators and policymakers continue the quest for providing educational equity to all students, this study will present vital information for our school leaders who lead these efforts. Darling-Hammond (2010) stated, "We need to take the education of poor children as seriously as we take the education of the rich, and we need to create systems that guarantee all of the elements of the educational investments routinely to all children" (p. 279).

Summary

All students deserve the opportunity to receive a quality public education. Minority students, in particular, who are educated in South Los Angeles, need solutions to the institutional barriers that continue to prevent successful academic achievement.

The disproportionate occurrences of violence, crime, drugs, and death that young people in impoverished communities are exposed to on a regular basis have an influence on the social, psychological, and emotional well-being that they bring to school, and these effects often go untreated (Howard, 2010, p. 3)

These schools require higher standards for those who become principals and superintendents, stronger and deeper curriculum in every subject, and freedom from burdensome regulations that undermine the professional autonomy (Ravitch, 2013) and practitioners are in dire need of the knowledge, strategies, and skills to assist them in their classrooms. This phenomenology research was guided by the work of Michael Fullan and JoAnne Quinn's Coherence Framework (2015) and Childress et al's Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Coherence Framework (2011). It is based on the idea that successful schools have effective principals that influence the school's programs and that minority-populated schools in an urban inner-city community can reach higher school success with excellent leadership.

While the demand for school leaders are growing more complex over time, it is important for the leader to refine their practices in order to continuously achieve improvements and implement successful reform in their schools. The results of this study suggested that principals understand the intricacies of the community they serve. They employ characteristics and qualities on an effective leader that includes aspects of leadership style and behavior that are appropriate for the circumstances, maintain strong instructional leadership, establish a collaborative learning

culture where all stakeholders have a voice, and know and understand the political and district influences in order to create a positive school culture.

Finally, school districts must begin to invest in our most deprived and disadvantaged students. This means creating systems of curriculum and assessment that points our nation toward the kind of learning our children need for the 21st century and equalizing access to critical educational resources, including a steady supply of well-prepared and well-supported teachers to all communities and a system in which all school models in the system support serious teaching and learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 279).

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Appendix A

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
Leader Form

My Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____ Leader ID #: _____

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank.

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

Use the following rating scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

1. I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts 0 1 2 3 4
2. I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate 0 1 2 3 4
3. I fail to interfere until problems become serious 0 1 2 3 4
4. I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards .. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I avoid getting involved when important issues arise 0 1 2 3 4
6. I talk about my most important values and beliefs 0 1 2 3 4
7. I am absent when needed 0 1 2 3 4
8. I seek differing perspectives when solving problems 0 1 2 3 4
9. I talk optimistically about the future 0 1 2 3 4
10. I instill pride in others for being associated with me 0 1 2 3 4
11. I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets 0 1 2 3 4
12. I wait for things to go wrong before taking action 0 1 2 3 4
13. I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished 0 1 2 3 4
14. I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose 0 1 2 3 4
15. I spend time teaching and coaching 0 1 2 3 4

Continued →

Appendix B

To what extent does your principal . . . ?

	ALMOST NEVER				ALMOST ALWAYS
I. FRAME THE SCHOOL GOALS					
1. Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals	1	2	3.	4	5
2. Frame the school's goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them	1	2	3	4	5
3. Use needs assessment or other formal and informal methods to secure staff input on goal development	1	2	3	4	5
4. Use data on student performance when developing the school's academic goals	1	2	3	4	5
5. Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers in the school	1	2	3	4	5
II. COMMUNICATE THE SCHOOL GOALS					
6. Communicate the school's mission effectively to members of the school community	1	2	3	4	5
7. Discuss the school's academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings	1	2	3	4	5
8. Refer to the school's academic goals when making curricular decisions with teachers	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ensure that the school's academic goals are reflected in highly visible displays in the school (e.g., posters or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Refer to the school's goals or mission in forums with students (e.g., in assemblies or discussions)	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Focus Group Teacher and Assistant Principal Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the Knox/68th school community to someone unfamiliar with your school? (For example: parents, students, personnel, expectations, norms or culture, or day-to-day school-wide activities. Please solicit both positive and negative attributes)

2. What leadership qualities and characteristics should the principal possess to effectively influence school improvement at this school? (Round Robin – Attempt to capture a few responses per participant)

3. Considering your school community, what would you consider to be the most effective leadership style (authoritative, transformative, or laissez-faire) of the principal that would influence increasing student achievement? Why?

3 Types of Leadership Styles
Authoritative: the leader makes executive decisions and in most cases informs what to do without input from others   Transformative: the leader encourages group discussions and believes in decision-making through consensus. The leader makes the final decision, but only after carefully considering what other group members have stated.   Laissez-Faire: minimal involvement from the leader; allows employees to make their own decisions.

4. What types of challenges do you think the principal encounters when implementing reform efforts that
    influence her decision-making and leadership behavior (Reform could be instructional/operational (i.e Writer's Workshop or relocating classrooms for better collaboration…Try to get at least 2 significant challenges)?

5. What do you consider as the principal's role in improving teaching and learning at this school?

6. What types of leadership supports do teachers need to ensure increased academic achievement at this
    school?

7. How would you characterize the climate of your neighborhood community? Do you feel your principal's efforts in guiding the school toward academic achievement is affected by the school's location?

8. To what extent do district policies support or hinder your principal's decision-making towards improved academic achievement?

9. Consider the 5 key areas of the study, what are some attributes in each of the areas that could explain

Appendix C continued

your school's underperformance as compared to other schools in South LA? (Other South LA schools such as Russell Elementary / Wisdom ES are close to or met the District's threshold percentage for the 2016 ELA SBAC)?

10. Do you feel the impact of the principal position at this school is different than the impact of the position at a non-urban inner- city school? Why or why not?

11. What obstacles exist at this school that makes it difficult for the principal to fulfill their responsibility
    of improving student's academic performance?

12. Please provide any other information you feel might be helpful in explaining issues affecting principal's successful implementation of reform in this school?

Appendix D

One-to-One Principal Interview Questions

1. How would you describe Knox ES / 68th ES to an individual unfamiliar with your school? (For example: parents, students, personnel, expectations, norms or culture, or day-to-day life. Please solicit positive and negative attributes)?

2 What leadership qualities and characteristics should the principal possess to positively influence school improvement at this school?

3. Considering your school community, what would you consider to be the most effective overall Leadership style (Authoritative, transformative, or laissez-faire) for increasing student achievement?

3 Types of Leadership Styles
Authoritative: the leader makes executive decisions and in most cases informs what to do without input from others Transformative: the leader encourages group discussions and believes in decision-making through consensus. The leader makes the final decision, but only after carefully considering what other group members have stated. Laissez-Faire: minimal involvement from the leader; allows employees to make their own decisions.

4. What types of leadership supports/behaviors do you feel your teachers need to ensure considerable increased academic achievement at this school? (behaviors = specific leadership actions)

5. As principal at this site, what do you consider as your role in improving teaching and learning?

6. What types of challenges do you encounter when implementing reform efforts that influence your decision-making and leadership behavior? (Reform could be instructional/operational (i.e Writer's Workshop or relocating classrooms for better collaboration...Try to get at least 2 significant challenges)

7. How would you characterize the climate of the neighborhood community? Do you feel your efforts in guiding the school toward academic achievement is affected by the school's location?

8. To what extent do district policies/mandates support or hinder your decision-making towards improved academic achievement?

9. Consider the 5 key areas of the study, what are some attributes in each of the areas that could explain your school's underperformance as compared to other schools in South LA? (Other South LA schools such as Russell Elementary / Wisdom ES are close to or met the District's threshold percentage for the 2016 ELA SBAC).

10. How important do you feel the 5 key factors are to improving student achievement? Are there
    Appendix D continued

    other factors you would add?

11. Do you feel the principal position at this school has the same impact the position at other non-urban inner-city schools (i.e. Schools in Hollywood, San Pedro, or West L.A)? Why or why not?

12. Can you think of possible obstacles at this school that make it difficult for you to fulfill your responsibility as school principal of improving student school-wide academic performance

13. Can you think of possible obstacles at this school that make it difficult for you to fulfill your responsibility as school principal of improving student school-wide academic performance

14. Please provide any other information you feel might be helpful in explaining issues affecting principal's successful implementation of reform at this school?

. Appendix E

Dear School Staff,

I am currently a doctoral candidate at the Concordia University, Irvine working an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. I am passionate about ensuring our inner-city minority students receive a quality education. As a requirement towards this degree, I will be conducting a research project entitled *The Leadership Practices Of Elementary Principals In Urban Inner-City Schools Of South Los Angeles That Impact The Successful Implementation Of School Reform Efforts.* The purpose of this study is to investigate the existing influences faced by today's elementary principals that affect implementation of reform. Specifically, it will determine if a there is a significant relationship between principal practices given the key factors (qualities of an effective leader, leadership style and behavior, instructional leadership, community, and political influences) and reform efforts in elementary schools in South Los Angeles. Your school is one of two school selected as a sample site that would be representative of other surrounding schools in understanding this phenomenon. I am requesting your consent to include you as a participant in this project.

This part of my research study will begin on February 1, 2017 through approximately November 3, 2017. Your participation will be to complete two brief 50-question surveys on an agreed upon date. Each survey will take less than 20 minutes to complete. Using a random procedure, some participants will also be scheduled for a one-hour interview to gather information that may not have been asked on either survey. The interview will take place after school on an agreed upon date and time.

There are no risks associated known by participating in this study and your identification as well as the name of the school will be kept confidential and will not be included in the final document. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue participating at any time.

Please know that your involvement is crucial and your knowledge will help educators and district leaders understand the complexities that exist within your school community and similar neighborhoods. I hope you will consider lending your voice to this study.

Appendix F

Participant Consent Agreement

Date: _____

Participant Name: _____

Dear Study Participant:

You are invited to be in a research study to understand the *Issues Impacting Reform Efforts in Urban Inner-City Elementary* Schools in urban inner-city communities. Your school was selected because it is located approximately three miles of the 1992 Civil Unrest in South Los Angeles and due to your school's 2015 summative academic performance. You are being asked to participate in the study because your insights and expertise are needed.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify the existing influences faced inner city elementary principals that influence implementation of reform strategies.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following during non-work hours:

1. Complete two survey instruments that address your perceptions of a principal's leadership style and instructional leadership. Each survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

2. All qualified teachers will participate in a focused group interview and each administrator will be asked to
   participate in an individual interview and to complete a daily activity log (see attached) during non-work hours for 5 days. All initial interviews should take no more than one hour and will be audio taped. An audio taped follow-up interview may be necessary to provide clarification. All follow-up interviews may take up to 20 minutes in length.

Risks and Benefits:

There are risks associated with all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. As an example, people may experience emotions when discussing issues about the work site. Also, while there are no direct benefits to you participating, it is hoped that your knowledge will provide insight to educators and school district officials regarding the challenges faced by inner city schools in South Los Angeles. The data you provide will

   Cost/Compensation: There will be no financial cost to you for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Under the privacy act of 1974, all information gathered will be confidential and will be maintained and secured on non-district property. Only the researcher will have access to the records. Investigators ensure confidentiality by ensuring that no references will be made to link your name to this study. Pseudonyms
will be used whenever referring to individuals. The data you provide will be compiled with other research documents to offer a holistic insight into the difficulty and complexity faced by current urban public schools. While individual names will not be included in this research, copies of the dissertation that includes summarized data maybe given to educational researchers and district officials upon request. A copy of the dissertation will be provided to the Chief Academic Officer of the district. Audio recordings will be erased once a verbatim transcript has been completed. Unless otherwise agreed to in advance, through informed consent, no one should have access to individual data or the names of the participants except the researcher(s) and the faculty advisor. The participants will know before they participate who would see the data.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may disengage from continuing during any part of the study without prejudice.

Contact and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Robin Benton. If you have any questions, you may contact me at robin.benton@eagles.cui.edu. You may also contact my Concordia University, Irvine, Dissertation Professor, Dr. Karge at belinda.karge@cui.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and have received answers. I consent to the use of audiotaping and to the release of the data for the purposes of this research study and to both survey publishers, Mind Garden and Phillip Hallinger of PIMRS. A copy of this form has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

Appendix G

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS

YOUR EXPERTISE IS NEEDED TO PROVIDE INPUT IN A STUDY
THAT SEEKS TO
UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES *AFFECTING REFORM EFFORTS*
IN URBAN INNER-CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES.

FOCUSED GROUP / FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW COMPONENT

Day, Date
2:45 – 3:45 p.m.

Name of School
School Address
City, State   Zip Code

PLEASE RSVP TO

ROBIN.BENTON@EAGLES.CUI.EDU

Appendix H

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS

YOUR EXPERTISE IS NEEDED TO PROVIDE INPUT IN A STUDY
THAT SEEKS TO
UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES *AFFECTING REFORM EFFORTS
IN URBAN INNER-CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS* IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES.

ON-LINE SURVEY COMPONENT

Day, Date
2:45 – 3:45 p.m.

Name of School
School Address
City, State Zip Code

PLEASE RSVP TO

ROBIN.BENTON@EAGLES.CUI.EDU

Appendix I

Daily Principal's Log

School: _____   Date: _____

Directions: Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study to understand the *Issues Impacting Reform Efforts in Urban Inner-City Elementary* Schools. The purpose of this activity is to attain the daily description of activities elementary school principals confront on a daily basis. You can modify the form. Then record the actions completed in 30-minute intervals for five days. For example, you might have addressed an office referral for a student due to inappropriate behavior, or conferenced with a member of your staff regarding classroom data. Include a comment where applicable.

Time	Activity – Reason for Activity	Comment
8:00 – 8:30 am		
8:31 – 9:00 am		
9:01 – 9:30 am		
9:31 – 10:00 am		
10:01 – 10:30 am		
10:31 – 11:00 am		
11:01 – 11:30 am		
11:31 – 12:00 pm		

Appendix J

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Robin Benton** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 07/02/2016.

Certification Number: 2105515.

Appendix K

mind garden

www.mindgarden.com

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to grant permission for the above named person to use the following copyright material for his/her research:

Instrument: *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*

Authors: *Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass*

Copyright: *1995 by Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass*

Five sample items from this instrument may be reproduced for inclusion in a proposal, thesis, or dissertation.

The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any published material.

Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc.
www.mindgarden.com

Appendix L

Dr. Philip Hallinger
7250 Golf Pointe Way
Sarasota, FL 34243
hallinger@gmail.com
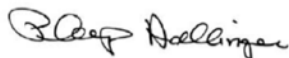
March 13, 2017

Robin Benton

Dear Robin:

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

Please note the following conditions of use:

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

2. This is a single-use purchase for the author's graduate research, thereby requiring purchase of additional rights for use in any future research.

3. *The user agrees to send a soft copy (pdf) of the completed study and the raw data set in Excel or SPSS to the publisher upon completion of the research.*

4. The user has permission to make minor adaptations to scale as necessary for the research.

5. If the instrument is translated, the user will supply a copy of the translated version.

Please be advised that a separate *permission to publish* letter, usually required by universities, will be sent after the publisher receives a soft copy of the completed study.

Sincerely,

Professor Philip Hallinger