

Examining Self-Perceptions of Leaders in Alternative School Settings

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Abstract

This study represents an examination of equity and leadership within alternative schools through the perspectives of alternative school leaders. Purposive sampling was used to select participants and research was conducted using the responsive interview technique. Six parent themes and 31 child themes were created through the examination of literature and participant responses. Equitable treatment of alternative schools by the districts they serve, is indicated by this study. Additionally, leaders' perceptions support three essential scales of leadership derived from the literature review. Outcome Orientation versus Systems Orientation, Self-Centered versus People Focused, and Status Quo versus Improvement all show as scales demonstrated by leaders in alternative schools with a focus on Systems Orientation, People Focused, and Improvement.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife. Without her commitment to our family and our relationship I would have never committed the effort to complete this arduous task. It is our experiences as educators and human beings which led me to select this topic and her participation in my life that has helped soften my heart and fueled my desire to work with at-risk students.

This work is also dedicated to Dr. Harold Frye and Dr. Jeanette Westfall. Without Dr. Westfall this work would have never begun. It was her mentorship that placed me on this path and my promise to her that kept me on it. Without Dr. Frye's patience, perseverance, and grace I may never have finished. I am thankful for his willingness to give me his time. Time is by far one of the most valuable things a human being has to give.

Lastly, I am thankful to my friends that never gave up on me during this work. They believed in me, harassed me, checked in on me, and counseled me at the right times. I consider it a blessing to have completed this work, but I consider the presence of my wife, mentors, and friends even more so.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Since public schools were founded, there has been a population of students that did not fit the mold of the typical, successful, diligent student. As public education has evolved, the philosophy of a student-centered approach to learning has emerged. The structure and course offerings of public school have changed over time to be more accommodating to the students on the fringe of disenchantment (Cook, 2003). Liberal and practical arts curricula have become commonplace and increase student engagement as well as the usefulness of public schools to their students. No Child Left Behind describes clear definitions for public school success including a demand for the graduation of students and a focus on tracking student learning (No Child Left Behind-Overview, 2014).

Thrust into this new world are the school leaders who face a daunting challenge to both manage school resources and facilities to be an instructional leader. Though the current generation of school leaders embrace this charge, they cannot prevent the disenfranchisement of a given population of students. No matter what public schools try under the diverse leadership of its administrators, some students do not fit into the structure of regular, public schools. Enter the alternative school, a place where those not suited for the structure of public school may go to gain their education. Enter also the alternative school administrator faced with a very specific set of problems in addition to those they would have encountered in the regular public school setting. It is reasonable to think that since an alternative school is designed around servicing students who have different needs than a normal public school can service, the leader of the alternative

school might have traits or behaviors that make them specially equipped for the alternative school. These traits and behaviors may be similar or dissimilar to those exhibited by a regular, public school administrator.

Our founding fathers believed in the power of education but debated the idea of education for all. They understood that an educational system was important. They believed that, by default, education would strengthen and ensure the perpetuation of our democratic system. The U.S. Constitution established this democratic system and in order to effectively participate in the government of the new world, the populace had to understand the concept of citizenship. Thomas Jefferson envisioned a school system that would be, at least, partially free and that would be based on the idea of a meritocracy (Conant, 1962). According to Jefferson's plan, only male students would be selected. As a young man demonstrated expertise, he would be separated from the other students, and sent on to the next level of education (Conant, 1962). In this method, a student could continue all the way through a university education at no expense to the student or his family (Conant, 1962). Our leaders created public education in order to create a populace that could support a republic as widespread as the United States (Kaestle, 2011). Thomas Jefferson wrote that the cost of education should be shared. The shared cost of education would make it available to more individuals and would allow the "best possible representatives" to run for office and be elected (Kaestle, 2011). Other statesmen saw public education as a melting pot for the instilling of nationalistic virtues and an opportunity to, once again, differentiate the new republic from the old world (Kaestle, 2011).

According to Kaestle and Conant, Benjamin Rush and Thomas Jefferson both advocated for free schooling for the masses but neither could convince their respective state governments to levy taxes to pay for such endeavors (Kaestle, 2011; Conant, 1962). When school systems of the 21st century are , one finds a different kind of debate centered on public schools. No longer is the discussion about whether or not states and governments should fund public schools, but what should be taught at them and how successful they are at educating the masses. In his study *What is alternative about alternative schools? A Comparison of Alternative High Schools to Traditional American High Schools*, John Cook wrote that two dominant theories emerged regarding high school curriculum. The first was led by Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, and advocated for a rigorous academic education centered on “Latin, Greek, Mathematics, English, foreign languages, natural history, physical science, geography, history, civil government, and political economy” (Cook, 2003, p. 13). Eliot seemed to have lost that argument when the Commission of Reorganization of Secondary Education identified the subjects of health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure time, and ethical character as the topics high school students needed most (Cook, 2003). This recommendation aligned with an earlier idea that the ethical character of a person is more important to the democracy than his ability to master academic subjects (Kaestle, 2011). This is a small but important step towards the creation of the alternative school. A recommendation that high school curriculum focus on more practical pursuits began to point the lens of education at what students needed and, by default, the welfare of the country. A practical curriculum embodies the idea that not all students are college-bound. This type of curriculum

embraces the multitude of student gifts, interests, abilities and should be considered when public school decision-makers develop educational policies.

While the U. S. Constitution establishes the requirement for the creation of a public school system, it does not require the Federal Government to monitor or fund that system. That charge is left to each individual state. However, since Lyndon Johnson's presidency and the creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), public education has endured more and more oversight from the Federal Government in the form of achievement requirements and opportunities to implement educational reforms. This involvement has impacted the states and their students in positive and negative ways.

In the last two decades, a sharper focus has been aimed at students and their learning. More pressure is placed on teachers to get results in their classrooms and school leaders are placed in the forefront of this struggle for learning. While the indirect charter for public schooling given in the Constitution has not changed, the world in which that charter is being implemented has changed in unpredictable and incredibly drastic ways. Because of this metamorphosis, the pre-existing concept of public education in the United States has been called into question. Studies such as *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Education, 1983) and legislation like *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) changed the scope and desired outcome of public education. *A Nation at Risk* described failing public schools and NCLB created requirements by which schools were held accountable. NCLB set the standard high. Proficiency indicators in Mathematics, Science, and Communication Arts were set so that 100% of a school's student population had to achieve proficiency by 2014 (*No Child Left*

Behind-Overview, 2014). Because the scope of public education has narrowed to what a student learns in the core content areas and learning is measured more and more by standardized testing, teachers and principals are looking more closely at the needs of the individual student. Funding is an additional concern. Students, who are not in attendance because of truancy or dropping out, cost the district valuable attendance dollars. Though individualized learning and district finances are the two important reasons for alternative schools, a third reason for the creation of alternative schools is dropout prevention. Dropout prevention, or persistence to graduation, is now closely linked to school accreditation (Knutson, 2014).

A focus on students' needs brought about by increased national scrutiny, has taught the teacher that the current structure of public education in the United States is not the best method for educating 100% of the United States populace. Learning modalities, styles, family support, race, socio-economic level, purpose for learning, and special needs are all factors in the success of any given student. May (1996) reported that the alternative school student typically demonstrates avoidance coping and may have a higher representative group of female students. May (1996) examined socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, coping methods, and health status. May (1996) found students who attend alternative schools typically develop a misplaced sense of independence. This independence drives students to try to act alone when solutions for academic or social problems could be better solved with assistance (May, 1996). May (1996) also confirms that students enrolled in an alternative school setting are more likely to be from a minority (Hispanic) racial demographic. Phelps (2003) added to the description of the alternative student by finding that students in an alternative setting typically had low

amounts of parental support. Phelps (2003) also cites that prior to placement in an alternative setting the student in question will have demonstrated any combination of “attendance problems, behavior and discipline issues, and academic concerns” (p. 22). This trinity of concerns listed by Phelps (2003) can be found in alternative school and dropout studies.

While students in the alternative setting demonstrate a trinity of problems, students seem to know what they need in order to maintain an engaged presence in the alternative school setting. Turner (2012) states that students in alternative schools want individual attention from teachers and curriculum that can be adjusted based on student need. Turner (2012) described learning styles which are also discussed in other studies. Logan (2002) compared the learning styles of traditional and alternative school students and found that alternative students preferred higher levels of noise and mobility in the school setting while traditional students demonstrated better persistence, preferred structure, and had higher rates of personal responsibility. Howerton (1998) sought to validate the Learning Style System (LSS) exam by administering it to alternative school students in Orange County California. Findings from the LSS validity study showed that 88% of the students endorsed the authenticity of the learning modality identified by the LSS and that 48% of the students matched the Direct learner profile while 39% matched the Competent learner profile (Howerton, 1998, pgs. 96). These findings coincide with Turner’s (2012) findings. Direct learners are defined as, “an actual-spontaneous learner who prefers freedom. These learners are usually physically involved, stimulated by the senses, realistic in the here-and-now, challenging, contesting, seeking immediate gratification, inductive, and left-brained” (Howerton, 1998, p. 10). The Competent

learner is “a conceptual-specific learner whose goal is to be competent, to acquire intellect, and to store up wisdom. These learners are characterized as intelligent, analytical, concise, critical, and deductive. They seek approval for competence, focus on technical details, and are right-brained” (Howerton, 1998, p. 9). Howerton (1998) and Turner (2012) both state that the majority of students in an alternative setting seek freedom. Howerton (1998) and Logan (2002) state that the majority of students in an alternative setting crave movement. Howerton (1998) states the Direct learner is physically involved and Logan (2002) states specifically that alternative students preferred mobility. There is evidence to suggest that the typical, classic structure of the public education environment is not conducive to the needs of all learners even though the need to educate all learners has become and continues to be the goal for American public schools.

Now public education leaders have realized they cannot sit back and expect students to conform to the model that has previously been provided. Now public education realizes that to fulfill its charge of educating the masses, education must adapt to and serve customers that would not have been successful in a model driven by a manufacturing mindset (Wise, 2008).

As leaders in public education begin to redesign the education system and move education towards a more appropriate and successful educational structure, its leaders seek other successful models on which to base reform. Leadership is one such model that can be examined. This study examined the self-perceptions of leaders in alternative schools to identify common themes and begin the construction of an alternative school leadership model.

Background

This study sought to examine the perceptions of men and women who have served as the leaders of alternative schools. This examination may provide a window into what it is like to lead an alternative school and what traits and behaviors are necessary for leadership in an alternative school.

The study also sought to examine the level of perceived equity regarding the educational setting of the alternative school versus the regular school environment. This was done through inquiry into the organizational culture of the two educational settings. This investigation may provide a starting point for the study of equity regarding the placement of students in an alternative school setting.

The history of education in the United States is a history of social equity. As this study examined the separate setting of the alternative school through the experiences of the leaders, the equity and practices of leadership in the alternative schools was revealed. For this research study, equity is characterized not by equality or the sameness of services. It is instead characterized by the ability to provide appropriate educational services, as determined by student need, to the student in the alternative school.

Statement of the Problem

Alternative schools exist in every state of the continental United States. According to the NCES 2010 report, districts that serve over 10,000 students have a 96% chance of having a district-sponsored alternative school (Carver, Lewis, Tice 2010). These schools serve a population with specific needs, difficulties, and predispositions towards education. Many of the students and families in the alternative school setting have a long history of disenchantment with organized, traditional schools. The NCES

reported that districts refer students to the alternative school setting for many reasons.

Data collected show students attend alternative schools for multiple reasons: 61% report for fighting, 57% for substance abuse or distribution, 57% for verbal disruption, 57% for continual academic failure, 53% for truancy, 51% for a weapon other than firearms, and 42% for possession or use of a firearm (Carver, Lewis, Tice 2010).

These students have seen the inside of the schoolhouse and have found they don't fit in. They feel that teachers in the regular schoolhouse did not put forth the effort for them, they did not fit socially, and the administrators treated them like just another problem kid or let the student go unnoticed altogether. The Self-System Model of Motivational Development described by Fall and Roberts claims that behavioral and academic engagement are primary players in dropout prevention (Fall, Roberts 2012). These educational orphans experience a level of disengagement in the normal school setting that is not conducive to their academic success. What leadership led to this state of malaise within the school? What actions and dispositions led to the creation of a school setting that made students feel excluded enough to exit either forcibly, voluntarily, or by passive, prolonged disengagement? What is the difference between the leadership in the regular school setting and that of the alternative school? Most importantly, what are the differences and similarities between the leaders of alternative schools and regular high schools? This study primarily sought to determine those administrative similarities and differences.

This study was also an excursion into equity of education. Brown et al. versus Board of Education of Topeka defined at least one type of equity for public education. This Supreme Court ruling determined that separate is not equal. This ruling declared

segregation in public schools unconstitutional because the conditions for educating students of a minority race were not equivalent to the standards of white schools and white students. While students in alternative schools are separated from the populace of the regular school, the resources available to them should be comparable or, more appropriately, determined by student need.

Students aren't the only population that suffers when resources are inadequate. Teachers must find ways to compensate for lack of materials, access to funds, obstruction of information, and feeling the discrimination of working at an alternative setting. Teachers in these settings often face questions about why they do what they do with "those kids," and the stigma that they aren't good enough to teach in the regular school setting. Also, resources for curriculum are inadequately disbursed in favor of the regular school setting and professional development resources, such as instructional coaches, are unavailable.

While the alternative school serves the purpose of giving students a last chance for success, and can be the difference between dropping out and a diploma, districts are often forced to add alternative schools to an already existing school structure. Instead of creating an alternative school with a vision toward diagnostic excellence, they see their birth as just a place to put kids that would otherwise be suspended or drop out altogether. Along with this comes a lower expectation for academic achievement and accountability.

The leaders of these schools face a constant battle between doing what they can with the resources they have and ensuring that every student in their care has what he or she needs to learn at high levels. They must also work to find teachers who are qualified to work with the population of the alternative school. These bastions of discipline

problems and emotionally disturbed youth do not seem attractive to teachers. Whether a teacher is new or experienced in the profession it is hard to fill a teaching job in an alternative school with the best and brightest teaching candidates. Logic dictates that it is smarter to work for the same pay, with more advantaged youth, who have a higher chance of success. This study used the perspective of the building administrator to explore perceived equity issues between the alternative school and the regular school setting.

Purpose of the Study

Leadership is a key ingredient to the success of any organization. Without the right kind of leadership, an organization finds itself stagnant and unproductive. The organization spends its time putting out whatever immediate problems present themselves instead of holding to its vision and moving consistently forward. Quality of school leadership is second only to teacher quality when considering school improvement (Hechinger 2011). This study may provide a window into the leadership mindsets of alternative school leaders and the research may identify the elements of leadership that alternatives school leaders have in common with regular school principals and with each other. This study may also provide a window into what differs in leadership between the two settings.

A secondary purpose of the study was to expose the equity of education between the alternative school and regular school setting. Asking subjects to compare their experiences between the high school and regular school setting will identify what, if any, the issues are with equitable funding, resource allotment, staffing patterns, and staff

training within the alternative school. Separate is not equal. This study sought to determine if the mantra of separate is not equal applied to the alternative school.

With an eye on graduation rates and school success in an ever-changing global economy, the success of the alternative school becomes more important than ever. The alternative school cannot be defined as a holding area for troubled youth as it was when the first reform schools for juvenile criminals were created. Now, because of more intense state monitoring and NCLB, the alternative school has to ensure the success of alternative school students and send them on their way with skills necessary for the 21st century. This skill set should empower alternative school students to participate in a productive life after high school. Through a lens focused on leadership and equity, we will begin to see a glimpse of whether or not alternative schools have made the transition from a holding area to academies that prepare students for life.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the large body of work on leadership and school equity. This study differs, however, in its focus. The alternative school does not appear as a topic for research as often as the regular school and there is much less examination of alternative school leadership. Though alternative schools have existed for years, they are often misunderstood, not talked about, and left out. While much research has been done on the impact of school leadership in a regular school setting, not much has been done to determine what traits and dispositions need to be present in order for an alternative school to experience success under a specific leader. By comparing responses in the qualitative study with pre-existing research on leadership, we can draw parallels and lines of

demarcation between what is proven as effective in a regular school setting and what is perceived as effective in an alternative school setting.

The conclusions drawn in this study can be used to inform the education of future and current teachers and school leaders. The more that is known about the education of special populations and the difficulties involved in achieving success, the more prepared future generations of educators can be to deal with these diverse students. Ultimately, the more we know about dealing with diverse and difficult populations of students, the more we know about dealing with the general population of students. Alternative school students exist in every educational context and setting. An inability to identify and work with these students only inhibits the success of the school in general, and the student in specific. District leaders may also use the results of this study to define staff recruitment criteria for alternative schools. Educational leaders may be able to use this study to fuel conversations regarding the equity of their own alternative programs and make adjustments in programming that already exists.

Delimitations

Selection of interview candidates provided the primary delimitations of this study. Subjects were chosen from administrative positions in both the regular and alternative school settings in equal numbers. Data were collected through interviews conducted using phone interviews, face to face, and web based video technology. No observations were done of the subjects throughout their workday and the findings of the study were solely based on the verbal responses of the subjects to the study questionnaire.

Assumptions

Assumptions were made that the subjects understood the interview questions. The researcher assumed that the subjects understood the day-to-day functions of their building and district. The researcher assumed that subjects had a working knowledge of educational leadership practices and the researcher assumed that subjects replied honestly and candidly to the interview questions.

Research Questions

RQ1. To what extent are factors that influence a person to pursue leadership in an alternative educational setting similar to factors that influence the pursuit of leadership in a regular school setting?

RQ2. To what extent are factors similar between an alternative and regular school setting that influence a leader to remain in or leave that setting?

RQ3. To what extent is the organizational culture similar or different between alternative and regular school settings?

RQ4. To what extent do individual perspectives of leadership resemble each other or differ between the alternative and regular school settings?

Definition of Terms

Responsive Interviewing. A method of gathering research in which the subject answers a series of questions and those answers are collected and analyzed as data.

Types of questions used are main questions, follow-up questions, and probing questions.

Main questions begin discussion focused on a research question. Follow-up questions are geared towards clarification and gathering more information on information introduced

by the subject, and probing questions are used to keep the discussion on topic (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Alternative School. Separate school location dedicated to the education of students whose needs cannot be addressed in a regular school environment (Carver and Lewis, 2010).

Public School. “Any educational setting operated at the public expense” (MO. ANN. STAT. § 160.11). It also advances someone towards some type of educational endorsement, whether that endorsement come from an elementary, high school, or institution of higher learning (School Enrollment, 2012).

Nationalism. Loyalty and devotion to a nation; *especially* : a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups (“nationalism” definition, 2015).

Liberal Arts. Coursework focused on Latin, Greek, Mathematics, English, foreign languages, natural history, physical science, geography, history, civil government, and political economy (Cook, 2003).

Practical Arts. Coursework focused on home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure time, and ethical character (Cook, 2003).

Instructional Leadership. Leadership that performs four basic roles providing resources, both instructional and non-instructional, communicator, and providing a visible presence (Marzano, McNulty, Waters, 2005).

Meritocracy. Selection based on the ability of a person to perform a task (Conant, 1962).

Learning Style. The predisposition of a student to be successful in a given environment with a prescribed set of stimuli (Logan, 2002).

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative research design using responsive interviewing was used as the data collection method for this study. Research questions were derived from an earlier study regarding ethnic equality conducted by McCauley (2013). While this study did not investigate ethnicity, equity is one of its topics. McCauley also investigated organizational culture as a factor in her study. This study examined organizational structure for similarities and differences between the regular and alternative school settings. McCauley's study served as a springboard for the research described here. Two of four research questions are based on her work while the remaining two were designed specifically for this study.

An expert panel comprised of current and former public education professionals approved all questions for this study. Panel members were currently working in the field of education and were currently or had recently held responsibilities relating to supervising curriculum, personnel, student services, or programming for an alternative and/or regular school setting. Panel members consisted of two curriculum directors (both former building principals), an educational consultant and former alternative program supervisor, and a student services director/assistant superintendent. Additionally, McCauley, a middle school assistant principal, was asked to participate due to the influence of her work on this study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one consisted of an introduction, a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definition of terms, and an overview of methodology. Chapter one also identified current trends in educational leadership, and a brief history of the public and alternative school settings. A literature review focused on leadership and the history of public and alternative education comprised chapter two. Chapter three identifies the research design, sample, instrumentation, and procedures for data collection. The data for the study were analyzed in chapter four. Chapter five provides a discussion of major findings, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

In order to establish a conceptual framework for this study an overview of literature was conducted in three different areas. Alternative schools, equity literature, and leadership in public education were all examined. This had to occur in order to establish essential knowledge of these subjects that could be used to both understand a little of the history of this research as well as provide comparison information that could be used with qualitative data sets. These two groups of information were used to establish the findings of the study discussed in chapter five.

While large amounts of research exist on alternative schools, leadership, and social equity, this chapter does not attempt to give a comprehensive accounting of that literature. Instead, this chapter seeks to provide an overview of what is important to the understanding of the study. Information presented is that which pertained to the research questions posed for this study in chapter one.

First, this chapter provides an examination of public and alternative schools. Because the dual foci of this study are about leadership and equity, this section will only be detailed enough to establish the differences between, and fully define, the regular and alternative school settings. The information provided regarding these two topics will be limited to school structure and bureaucracy, curriculum, teaching, and maintaining order within the school setting. This chapter also provides a brief historical overview of alternative schools and their

purpose in today's educational setting. This section compares and contrasts how the two settings are presented in literature.

The second part of this chapter discusses factors that impact a leader's decision to stay in a given setting. Equity and factors of job satisfaction in the public school setting are discussed. Essential legislation regarding educational equity is reviewed including but not limited to special education reform and racial equity. This examination is important because alternative schools are often housed in facilities that are separate from the public school setting, they often serve a large population of minority students, and research questions defined in this study focus on equity.

The third part of this chapter examines current literature on leadership in public schools. The heart of this study lies in the leadership stories of its participants. In order to fully examine the data created by those stories, a picture of educational leadership must be created which can be used to examine the collected data set.

Characteristics of Regular and Alternative Schools

The background of public education is a history of heated political debate. The success of schools, the curriculum of schools, the expertise of teachers, the structure of schools, and the time allotted to public schools have all been topics for discussion since the inception of public schools in the United States. As Cook (2003) writes, the Committee of Ten argued for classical curriculum in 1893. This was the first volley of a never ending debate for a rigorous academic curriculum versus a curriculum that addressed a wider range of needs and

hopefully garnered more student engagement. In 1965, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act shined a spotlight on public education and increased the federal government's formal involvement with public education (McMurrey, 2015). The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) was the next major policy put into place. Signed into law in 1975, IDEA laid the groundwork for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (No.RS20366, 2002). Along with U.S. Supreme Court decisions like *Brown v. Board of Education*, and compulsory attendance laws the modern face of the public education student population was created (*Brown v. Board*, 2015).

According to census information posted on the Childstats.gov website, the population of children from ages six to seventeen is 29.7 million (Child Population, 2015). The United States educates the vast majority of its children. Based on the data in Table 1, the United States had nearly 100% student enrollment in all public school ages (School Enrollment, 2012):

Table 1:

Percentage of students enrolled in school by age and gender.

Age range	Male	Female
5-6 years old	93.2	93.2
7-9 years old	97.7	98.0
10-13 years old	98.2	98.0
14-15 years old	98.3	98.2
16-17 years old	95.7	95.8

Note: Statistics from Childstats.gov 2015.

These numbers are important in understanding the current setting in which United States public education occurs. Also important is the Census Bureau's definition of a regular school. According to the Census Bureau's website, "A regular school advances a person towards an elementary school certificate, high school diploma, or college, university, or a professional school (such as law or medicine) degree" (School Enrollment, 2012). Also important to note is that the Census Bureau updates its information through surveys of 50,000 American households (School Enrollment, 2012). The numbers reported do not take into account families who have children enrolled or not enrolled who may be here illegally. Based on the collection process reported numbers may vary, however, the end result is still the same: Almost all American children, regardless of ethnicity, gender, and ability are enrolled in school.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2008), school in the US consists of three educational levels: early education, primary (elementary), and secondary (middle and high schools). Because most states have compulsory education laws students start

school by age eight and are required to stay enrolled until they reach anywhere from 16-18 years of age (Bush, 2010).

While the American school system spans 13 years of education, this study is primarily concerned with the educational processes that occur in high school. It is in the high school years that students begin to select courses of action that put them on a path to the alternative school, and it is the alternative school leaders in secondary education, who lends their voices to the interviews in this study.

According to Cook (2003), "...the bureaucracies of the American school have been designed primarily to provide direct, uncomplicated ways to maintain control and promote orderliness" (p.30). This idea is reinforced by the setup of the American high school. The day is divided up into sections that are typically 40-60 minutes long, the school is divided up into separate classrooms and areas that are designated for special purposes (like the gym and lunchroom), and the curriculum is divided up into courses. To further this idea of division for order, students are divided by age and placed in core classes primarily based on the age of a student's cohort. Teachers are divided into groups based on curricular content areas and these groups are called departments or teams. Teams can be even further divided into collections of teachers that teach the same courses within the content.

Teaching and learning is also divided and categorized. Most curriculum comes with a guide which describes the amount of time teachers are to spend on certain topics and when during the school year these topics are to be taught. In a given classroom students are assigned work, the work is explained, and students are expected to complete

it by a certain date. Though academic help is available, many times it can only happen outside of the regular school day, making it impossible for some students to access.

As courses progress, students are assigned grades based on their ability to complete assignments correctly and these grades are averaged together to provide a final grade at the end of the course. Though students are allowed some choice in course work, these choices are minimal until the last year of high school when most credits have been earned, and required courses have been passed. While a debate continues to rage regarding rigor and relevance in curriculum offered in high schools, many students have trouble finding either regardless of where they might look. Combine this setting with the onset of standardized testing brought about by an increased focus on school accountability and we begin to see a recipe for student disenfranchisement.

The conditions for disenfranchisement aren't reduced when school stakes are high and student stakes are low. While a school might lose accreditation, be placed on probation, and lose funding because it doesn't meet the academic requirements of ESEA, the individual student has very low accountability for anything other than attendance. Even the promise of a better life earned through high school graduation no longer holds true for today's students. In the 2012-2013 school year America attained its highest graduation rate of 81% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). At the same time Robert Reich (2015) claims that the structure the U.S. currently has in public education is in need of revision. Reich (2015) states that our education system "...was built to feed the assembly lines that powered our economy over the last century." Reich (2015) claims that in order to keep up with the changing economic environment, our schools need to stop endless testing, increase federal funding and social support services, increase teacher

pay, limit class sizes to 20 students, offer free vocational training, and offer free college education.

One can't fully understand the public high school without understanding the power of the Carnegie Credit and how public schools are funded. The Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching (Carnegie Foundation) (2015) claims that the Carnegie Unit is a standard for student access to subject matter. One Carnegie Unit equaled exposure to curriculum, one hour a day, five days a week, for 24 weeks. Thus the total amount of exposure was 120 hours (Carnegie Foundation, 2015). This concept, created in 1905, is still the standard for awarding credit in the high school setting. Because it is still the standard measure for learning, it is the standard measure for the school period, the school day, the school week, and year. School districts who allow this to rule the academic process struggle to come up with alternatives. Most states have systems in place that would allow a student to substitute other forms of learning for exposure time (Heitin, 2015). Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire have dropped the Carnegie Credit and gone completely to assigning credits based on competency-based learning (Heitin, 2015). The idea of exposure and seat time resulting in student readiness is not only present in the assigning of credits, it is also core to how schools are funded.

In order to illustrate school funding, the state of Missouri was the model. Missouri was chosen for this study because of the researcher's background and familiarity with Missouri education policies and practices. One of the measures for school achievement in Missouri is attendance. In order for schools to achieve adequate yearly progress, school districts in Missouri must attain an attendance rate of 90% of all students at 90% attendance or an increase in attendance over the previous year. While

attendance seems to be a logical choice for evaluating school effectiveness, attendance reimbursement is designed based on the idea of the Carnegie Credit.

Not only are hours of attendance (hours of exposure) used to calculate school effectiveness, they also determine funding. There are four basic criteria that are examined to determine funding for school districts in Missouri. The state adequacy target, the dollar value modifier, and local effort serve as three criteria. The last is weighted average daily attendance (Understanding the Missouri Foundation Formula, 2015). Weighted average daily attendance takes into account students with special needs, free and reduced lunch rates and limited English proficiency but is still based on the number of hours a student attended school versus the number of hours a student should have attended (Understanding the Missouri Foundation Formula, 2015).

If a student is able to demonstrate mastery of content, in many cases, they are still required to attend school. This is due to the negative impact the absence will have on funding and a school's inability to process mastery outside of seat time. Neither of these concerns are related to student learning.

While most students are able to achieve high school graduation, according to 2012 data, 20% of high school students still do not graduate (Layton, 2014). According to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2006), common reasons for dropping out include but are not limited to: classes aren't interesting, students aren't motivated to work, and personal responsibilities over-rode the importance of school. The Gates Foundation (2006) also reported that some students left because of failing grades, poor preparation for high school, and inability to do the required work regardless of personal effort. Alternative schools seek to address

these issues and meet the multitude of needs and dispositions present in the body of students they serve.

According to Raywid (2001) there are three types of alternative schools. She labels them Type I, II, and III respectively. The first, School of Choice, offers different learning opportunities for students than would normally be offered for student learning. A magnet school that specializes in the fine arts is an example of a Type I: School of Choice. The second, or Type II, is the Last-Chance School, whose purpose is to help disruptive students continue their education. Lastly, the Type III, is the Remedial School, which facilitates a curriculum and practices designed for academic and/or social rehabilitation. While Raywid (1994) offers the three types of alternative schools, the National Dropout Prevention Center labels nine different types of alternative schools and defines them:

1. School within a school—designed for students needing a separate location within the traditional school, usually a separate wing with different staff for their academic or social behavior programs.
2. School without walls—designed for students requiring educational and training programs delivered from various locations within the community, usually requires flexible student schedules.
3. Residential School—designed for special case student, usually placed by the courts or the family, with special counseling and educational programs.

4. Separate Alternative Learning Center—designed for students needing high school credits, and operated by public school staff, but using a college facility to enhance the student’s self-esteem and offer other services that would benefit the student’s growth.
5. College-Based Alternative School—designed for students needing high school credits, and operated by public school staff; but using a college facility to enhance the student’s self-esteem and offer other services that would benefit the student’s growth.
6. Summer School—designed to be either remedial for academic credits or to enhance a students’ special interest, perhaps in science, computers, etc.
7. Magnet School—designed to focus on selected curriculum areas with specialized teachers and with student attendance usually by choice.
8. Second-Chance School—designed for students who are judged to be troubled and placed in the school by the courts or the school district as a last chance before being expelled or incarcerated.
9. Charter School—designed as an autonomous educational entity operating under a contract negotiated between the state agency and the local school sponsors. (Dropoutprevention.org, July 11, 2016)

As these definitions are examined, we can see how Raywid’s (2001) categories hold up. Each of Hefner-Packer’s (1991) alternative school descriptions can be classified as subcategories in Raywid’s three types of schools. As a clear definition is sought for the purpose of streamlining the examination

process, Hefner-Packer's (1991) classifications are grouped according to Raywid's (2001) descriptions of the three types of alternative schools.

Raywid's (2001) definition of a Type I: School of Choice includes any school that a student can opt into based on a decision made by the student and their family. This decision may be reached according to student special interest. Hefner-Packer's School Without Walls, Magnet School, and Charter School fit this category because of the involvement of student choice and the potential for curriculum beyond what is offered in a normal school setting.

Raywid's Type II School is the Last Chance School (Raywid, 2001). Because this type of school is characterized as serving students with severely disruptive behavior, Hefner-Packer's (1991) Second Chance and Residential Schools fall into this category. Their emphasis on dealing with students who have been placed by the juvenile court system or who have demonstrated dangerous or severely disruptive behavior places these schools in this category.

The third category, Type III School, discussed by Raywid (2001) is the remedial school. Hefner-Packer's (1991) School Within a School, Separate Alternative Day School, and Summer School all fall into this category. All of the definitions of these school-types by Hefner-Packer center around special academic needs such as credit recovery.

While Raywid (2001), Raywid (1994), and Hefner-Packer (1991) label and define types of alternative schools, the National Dropout Prevention Center for (NDPC) has identified, through research, the common characteristics of

successful alternative schools. NPDC (2015) advocates for these common characteristics to be the framework for all schools:

1. A maximum teacher/student ratio of 1:10.
2. A small student base not exceeding 250 students.
3. A clearly stated mission and discipline code.
4. A caring faculty with continual staff development.
5. A school staff having high expectations for student achievement.
6. A learning program specific to the student's expectations and learning style.
7. A flexible school schedule with community involvement and support,
8. A total commitment to have each student be a success.

(Dropoutprevention.org, July 11, 2016)

Robert Reich (2015) would agree with the use of these criteria for use in wide-spread school reform. His recommendations for education reform are similar to these criteria, even if they aren't as idealistic. Though Reich (2015) does not address overall school size, he does address teacher quality, class size, and community involvement. This study used the definitions provided by Raywid (2001) and Raywid (1994) as descriptors for alternative schools and the criteria provided by NDPC as the foundation to compare the answers of study participants.

Equity in Alternative Schools

The description of alternative schools demonstrates that all types of alternative schools occupy a separate space within a school system. Whether that

space is defined by a different schedule, a set of teachers, grading practices, curricular focus, program purpose, or physical location the alternative school is distinct. The focus of the alternative school is less on processing student learning in an assembly line style, and more about finding ways to help the student participate in an educational process geared for their needs. In this respect alternative schools represent a beacon of hope for students who have never felt comfortable in the regular school setting.

There are issues that arise when schools and programs are designed to be separate from the regular school setting. The United States has a long history of struggle with the equitable education of those who were educated in programs outside of the regular classrooms. This study discusses equity related to two pieces of legislation, IDEA and *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*. Though this study does not examine the treatment of special education students or the inequities associated with race specifically, it does seek to identify whether or not the leadership in the alternative school setting has determined that the programs they lead are treated with equity by the districts they serve. The examination of legislation and court decisions created as solutions to problems in our history allows us to answer the question: What is an equitable education? Once this question is answered, we can use it to compare the answers of study participants.

Though children and adults with physical and cognitive disabilities have always been present in the U.S. According to Education News (2015), the first public school was the Boston Latin School founded in 1635. The Boston colonists understood that boys needed more education than just the reading and

writing instruction they received at home. Education for women happened at home and only if a girl's family was rich enough to afford a tutor (Education News, 2015). It took more than 300 years to produce legislation that began to incorporate the education of all students. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy created the President's Panel on Mental Retardation (The History of Special Education in the United States, 2015). In 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or ESEA (Johnson, 1965), and in 1975 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and IDEA were signed into law (The History of Special Education in the United States, 2015). Public Law 94-142 (1975) identified four purposes for its existence: A free and appropriate education, protect the rights of handicapped students and their parents or guardians, assist states and local school districts to provide education for their handicapped population, and ensure effective methods are used to educate handicapped children.

While some students with special needs are still assigned to separate classrooms for specific services, common practice in education dictated by PL 94-142, is to include these students in the regular classroom as much as possible. Laws guarantee access and support services and families are in regular contact with schools regarding the education of their handicapped children. Beginning in 1965, after waiting centuries for change, special education students have access to an education that is the same or comparable to their non-handicapped peers.

While today conditions for handicapped students are good, it wasn't always so. Prior to PL 94-142, many of the students serviced by public education

would have lived in state institutions and/or not even attended school. According to *Thirty-five Years of Progress in Educating Children with Disabilities Through IDEA* (2010), the handicapped lived in conditions that provided minimal food, clothing, and shelter. Even after IDEA was passed, states still had laws preventing the education of handicapped children and many children did not have access regardless of the federal law. Even though a federal law had been passed, the implementation of this law lagged, and court cases such as the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens versus Commonwealth (1971) and Mills versus Board of Education of the District of Columbia (1972) had to reinforce PL 94-142 and challenge states to achieve a more significant implementation of IDEA. In spite of legal requirements, public education continued to cling to centuries old practices of separation according to the characteristics of the student. In this case that separation occurred because of a cognitive or physical handicap.

Ethnic Equity

The educational history of the United States seems to be painted with the brush of inequity. While individuals with disabilities fought battles for proper treatment, men and women of color were entrenched in a similar struggle. Arnett (2015) quotes Johnson in Arnett's article *Separate and Unequal*. Johnson states:

First, there was the outright ban on access to education during slavery. Reconstruction came after and then, finally, at the construction of Black institutions there was unequal funding and second-rate resources – issues historically Black institutions are still fighting to dismantle. (Arnett, 2015, p.13)

In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was signed and became law (PL 88-352) but desegregation did not occur right away. According to Holzman (2012), black males still face significant struggles in middle and high school. Even 30 years after the Civil Rights Act, school districts continued to struggle with desegregation. In 1995 the Kansas City School District still used millions of dollars of state money to transport students to their magnet schools. The state still determined the Kansas City School District had not met the criteria of enrollment. The federal courts recommendation was that enrollment figures be 65% minority and 35% white (Celis, 1995).

While the Civil Rights Act prepared the way for equitable education for minorities, these minorities continued to be separated until the Supreme Court decision regarding Brown versus Board of Education. Prior to this, Jim Crow laws, or laws that allowed blacks to be separated from their white counterparts, mandated separate facilities, transportation, and schools for blacks.

Brown v. Board of Education was the name given to a group of five cases centered on abolishing the separate but equal mandate. Chief Justice Warren wrote the response of the court and claimed that the court examined buildings, curricula, qualifications and salaries of teachers, and other tangible factors. Additionally, the court examined the effect that segregation has on students who are segregated. Not only did the court determine that segregation was bad for black students, but it also decided it was equally bad for white students. While facilities and “tangible” factors could be monitored and equitably distributed, the social aspect of interacting with people of a different race could not. When races mix, both sides benefit (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).

Leadership

In order to begin the definition of the leader in the specific contexts of the regular and alternative school environments, a general definition must be given.

Burns (1978) defines leadership "...as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivation—the wants and the needs, the aspirations and the expectations—of both leaders and followers" (p.19). At times leaders self-select and at times they are selected by others. The school leader is a combination of these two selection processes. The would be principal determines that school leadership is something they want to pursue and is then selected, after a period of trials, to be a building principal. Principals may serve as interns, assistant principals, or teacher leaders prior to entering the principalship or they may not.

While public schools were not originally assigned a dedicated leadership position, the fulfillment of this role has become commonplace today. As schools became more complex and needed to service more students than the one-room schoolhouse, a need for organizational management emerged. Staratt (1995) described the principal as an agent of multiple responsibilities. The school principal is in charge of implementing policies, maintaining positive school-community relationships, and for the professional opportunities and development of the teaching staff within the school. More recently, Leithwood et al. (2004) claimed that the principal influences school culture, teacher quality and retention, staff professional development, student behavior, and parent satisfaction. The

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides the following standards that define successful leadership in the public school setting in the Principal Leader Standards for Missouri's Educator Evaluation System (2013):

1. Vision, Mission, and Goals: Education leaders have the knowledge and ability to ensure the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community.
2. Teaching and Learning: Education leaders have the knowledge and ability to ensure the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program that applies best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.
3. Management of Organizational Systems: Education leaders have the knowledge and ability to ensure the success of all students by managing the organizational structure, personnel, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. Collaboration with Families and Stakeholders: Education leaders have the knowledge and ability to ensure the success of all students by collaborating with families and other community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. Ethics and Integrity: Education leaders have the knowledge and ability to ensure the success of all students by acting with integrity and in an ethical manner.

6. Professional Development: Education leaders have the knowledge and ability to ensure the success of all students by remaining current on best practices in education administration and school-related areas as evidenced in their annual professional development plan. (p. 2)

The role of the Principal has been clearly defined. That definition provides the “what” of the principalship. However, this study is more concerned with the ‘how’ of the principalship. Stated in another way, what leadership dispositions and behaviors that combine to create a principal’s leadership style? The act of defining leadership styles provides a lens through which this study examined participant responses and processed data sets. To establish styles of leadership the long history of leadership study must be examined.

Until the 1940s leadership theory focused on the traits of the leader. In the 1960s the study of leadership included followers’ traits and situations. In the 1980s leadership theory included inspiration and transformation. Leadership study now includes all of these variables and has since the turn of the 21st century (Burns & Burns, 2008). As the understanding of organizational culture evolved, so did the understanding and study of leadership within an organization. To summarize, leadership study engages cognitive, behavioral, and social theories.

Cognitive theories of leadership center on the perceptions of study participants. The first type, Implicit Theories of Leadership (ILT), is determined completely by the individual. That is, the ideal leaders, their dispositions and behaviors, are defined by an individual’s idea of a good leader. This ILT leader definition can be created with or without leadership study. In slight contrast, Grounded Theory is a definition of a leader

that is "...grounded in the users' concepts, assumptions, language, and expressions" (p. 48, Bass & Bass, 2008).

Bass and Bass (2008) compare and contrast the following types of leadership styles: autocratic versus democratic, directive versus participative, task versus relations orientation, and initiation versus consideration. They also discuss charismatic leadership and transformational leadership. Definitions of these styles of leadership lay the groundwork for a comparison with the data collected from subjects who were interviewed for this study. In relationship to RQ4, the participants were asked to describe their background and discuss the style of leadership they tried to emulate.

One cannot discuss leadership without addressing the dynamic of power. In this case power refers to the influence and control a person is given within a given organization. Maxwell (1998) writes "...if you don't have influence, you will never be able to lead others" (p.11). Power results from a relationship in which one person is able to gain compliance from another and the compliant person depends on the dominant person for results that can't otherwise be achieved from another source (Emerson, 1964).

Leadership cannot occur without the imbalance of power and compliance. Though the definition of leadership is not limited to coercing compliance, compliance, or buy-in, is an essential element to successful leadership. By definition this is also true for power.

The first of the Bass and Bass (2008) comparisons is autocratic versus democratic. Autocracy is defined by Merriam Webster as, "a form of government in which a country is ruled by a person or group with total power or a country that is ruled by a person or group with total power" ("autocracy" definition, 2015). In this definition,

the autocratic leader maintains all of the decision making ability and all of the power in the organization. Democratic, also called participative, leadership still maintains a centralized leader, but that leader shares the decision-making and responsibility with those who are influenced by him/her. The democratic leader allows two-way influence by integrating the ideas and opinions for subordinates into solutions that determine how the group will proceed (Northouse, 2004). While the autocratic leader depends only on himself or herself for determining the course of the organization, the democratic leader involves those they have power over in planning a course of action. Bass and Bass (2008) state that autocratic leadership works well when there is a significant imbalance of knowledge. When the leader's knowledge is high and the subordinates' knowledge is low, autocratic leadership works best. Democratic leadership works best when knowledge is evenly distributed, or the leader has the same level of knowledge as the subordinate. Autocratic leadership is more efficient, but can be bad for moral, while democratic leadership takes time, interpersonal skills, and support from the leader's supervisors (Smither, 1991).

Directive and participative leadership are described by Bass and Bass (2008) as being on a continuum of implementation. Directive leadership is similar to autocratic leadership, but the directive leader may coerce, convince, offer rewards, and exert pressure to gain acceptance. The directive leader understands the necessity of gaining agreement from those being led but still holds the decision making power. The directive leader may or may not consult with others (Bass & Bass, 2008). The participatory leader leads their subordinates in a decision making process that is shared. He or she listens, equalizes power, is open about his or her problem solving process and uses follower's

ideas. The participatory leader aims for consensus, a state in which all those involved unanimously embrace a collectively created course of action, while the directive leader uses interpersonal skills to gain compliance with their decision.

Task orientated leaders are defined by Bass and Bass (2008) as leaders whose “assumptions about their roles, purposes, and behavior reflect their interest in completing assignments and getting the work done” (p.498). Likewise, Hersey and Blanchard (1977) state situational leadership can be narrowed down to two leadership concerns: the desire to complete a task and/or the leader’s concern for the relationship. Based on these definitions, we can see that while a task oriented leader’s focus is on finishing the job, the relations-minded leader is focused on the people doing it. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) state that this continuum is often traveled from one end or the other based on the maturity of followers. Northouse (2004) defines this as “competence and commitment” of those being led. Figure 1 demonstrates the different approaches of leaders who situationally address task versus relations based on follower ability and willingness. Ability and willingness constitute the two attributes that denote follower maturity.

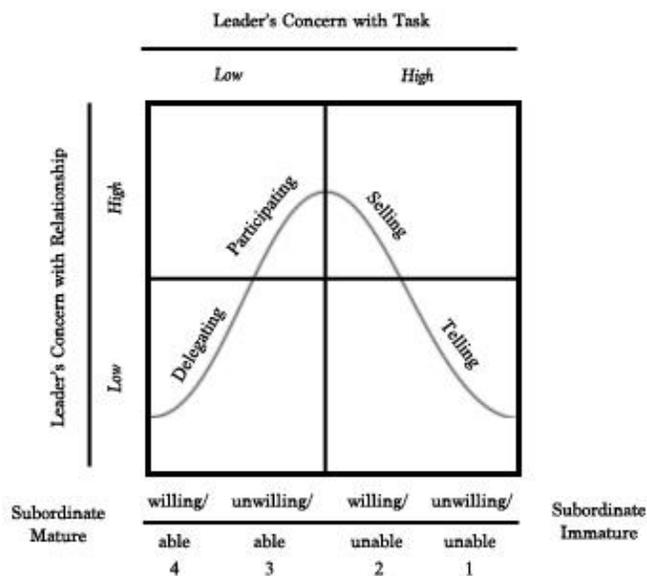


Figure 1. Hersey-Blanchard Model of the Relationship between Leader Style and Maturity of Followers (Blanchard & Hersey, 1977).

As with other comparative models of leadership, initiation versus consideration contrast each other through task orientation versus relationship orientation. The considerate leader seeks to strengthen their relationship with subordinates by listening, forming mutual trust, putting subordinate ideas into action, and seeking consensus (Bass & Bass, 2008). At the other end of the spectrum, the leader who focuses on initiation (of structure) has their attention focused on making sure the group is active, organizing that activity, and defining how the work should be done (Bass & Bass, 2008). The leader high in the initiation scale is not likely to consult with his or her followers when making decisions and problem solving.

While styles of situational leadership exist at opposite ends of the same continuum, transformational and transactional leadership styles do not. Burns (1978) claimed that both transformational and transactional leadership were multidimensional

and differ significantly enough to have their own subcategories. In short, transactional leadership is accomplished through trading one thing for another and transformational leadership is focused on organizational change (Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2005). Burns (1978) claims that the transforming leader helps followers understand goals and strategies to reach those goals, become team oriented instead of primarily concerned about the self, and instills within their followers a desire for achievement and self-actualization. Leithwood (1994) summarized the behaviors of the transformational leader through the creation of his four I's: Individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence.

Similar to transformational leadership is instructional leadership. Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2005) wrote, that the concept of instructional leadership is fairly new, emerging over the last two decades and it is hard to define (p.18). Multiple authors have dedicated work to this concept to differentiate it from transformational leadership, but Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) do not. They write that it is an application of transformational leadership because it “aspires, more generally, to increase members’ efforts on behalf of the organization, as well as develop more skilled practice” (p.20). Because the focus of instructional leadership is organizational change, it falls into the definition for transformational leadership.

The transactional leader enters into a partnership with followers in which both parties serve their own self-interests (Bass, 2008). This type of leadership is characterized by rewards contingent on achievement of specified goals, or contingent reward and management by exception (Bass, 2008). Management by exception is

characterized by action taken by the leader, when the follower doesn't meet designated goals.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a customer-centered leadership style first created by Edward Deming. Deming proposed that organizational leadership could be defined by 14 principles and that these principles could be applied to all organizations. Deming (1986) espoused a focus on the total system within the organization and did not differentiate the importance of things like continuous learning, continuous improvement of the system, and shared responsibility for the system. While at first TQM might seem to be task focused, it is not. TQM places equal emphasis on the system, the goals of the system, and the people involved in the system. The 14 points are not independent, they are, instead, interdependent (Deming, 2014). Deming (2015) listed his 14 points as the following:

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service, with the aim to become competitive and to stay in business, and to provide jobs.
2. Adopt the new philosophy. We are in a new economic age. Western management must awaken to the challenge, must learn their responsibilities, and take on leadership for change.
3. Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality. Eliminate the need for inspection on a mass basis by building quality into the product in the first place.
4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag. Instead, minimize total cost. Move toward a single supplier for any one item, on a long-term relationship of loyalty and trust.

5. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service, to improve quality and productivity, and thus constantly decrease costs.
6. Institute training on the job. Institute leadership (see Point 12 and Ch.8). The aim of supervision should be to help people and machines and gadgets to do a better job. Supervision of management is in need of overhaul, as well as supervision of production workers.
7. Drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the company (see Ch.3).
8. Break down barriers between departments. People in research, design, sales, and production must work as a team, to foresee problems of production and in use that may be encountered with the product or service.
9. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the work force asking for zero defects and new levels of productivity. Such exhortations only create adversarial relationships, as the bulk of the causes of low quality and low productivity belong to the system and thus lie beyond the power of the work force.
10. Eliminate work standards (quotas) on the factory floor. Substitute leadership.
11. Eliminate management by objective. Eliminate management by numbers, numerical goals. Substitute leadership.
12. Remove barriers that rob the hourly worker of his right to pride of workmanship. The responsibility of supervisors must be changed from sheer numbers to quality.
13. Remove barriers that rob people in management and in engineering of their right to pride of workmanship. This means, inter alia, abolishment of the annual or merit rating and of management by objective (see Ch.3).
14. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement.

15. Put everybody in the company to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everybody's job. (Deming.org, July 25th, 2016)

In servant leadership, the leader considers himself or herself a servant first and a leader second (Greenleaf, 2015). While a person who is a leader first leads to satisfy a need for power or to acquire material possessions, the leader who is servant first is focused on the growth of the individuals with whom he works (Greenleaf, 2015). However, according to Peter Block, Ken Blanchard, Max DePree, and Larry Spears, this style of leadership is compatible with and complements other styles of leadership like TQM (Greenleaf, 1998). Spears (2004) writes the servant leader seeks to base his or her decision-making on ethical and caring behavior. He also writes that servant leadership is based on community and teamwork, shared decision making, and focused on the personal growth of others while attending to the quality of the organization (Spears, 2004). Marzano (2005) claims that there are critical skills associated with servant leadership: “1) Understanding the personal needs of those within the organization. 2) Healing wounds caused by conflict within the organization. 3) Being a steward of the resources of the organization. 4) Developing the skills of those within the organization. 5) Being an effective listener” (p.17). The servant leader places the ethical and moral treatment of the organization members first and knows that, through the growth of the organizational members, leadership is strengthened and the system will be well maintained and improved.

While we are warned by Elmore (2000) against romanticizing leadership, it seems to be a natural human instinct. This instinct drives us to believe that leaders are born with certain traits and dispositions that allow them to rise to the top of organizational hierarchy

and be given influence over others. However, the study of leadership and the styles of leadership presented here all present definitions that can be used as guidelines for behavior. We know that behavior can be learned, children can be taught manners, perishable groceries placed in the refrigerator, laws obeyed etc. If this is true, then we must also conclude that behaviors associated with leadership can be learned. Though part of this study seeks to determine, through the interview process, what style of leadership subjects espouse to emulate, it does not seek to identify pre-existing dispositions or inherited traits the subjects may or may not possess. The position of this research is that leadership styles can be learned and the behavior of the leader adjusted to match the idealized guidelines for leadership. Hence, for the purpose of this study, we examine leadership through the focus of the leader – where the leaders expended their energy regarding the organization.

Is the leader primarily concerned with outcomes, processes, or people? Does the leader's motivation stem from the desire to increase their own status or does it originate from the desire to increase the wellbeing and achievement of the organization through its members? Discussion of leadership models indirectly describe three different but related scales of concern and effort. The first scale describes concern with outcome versus process. The leader who is primarily concerned with outcomes will focus on rewards and punishments for work quality while one focused on process will focus on the impact of the system that determined a quality of work. The leader who is outcome oriented focuses on workers in the worst way while the leader who is focused on process continuously strives to diagnose the system and repair it.

The second scale describes the relationship between energy expended on maintaining the status quo versus constantly seeking to improve the organization. A leader who creates an environment that resists organizational change and growth is focused on the keeping things the same within the organization. A leader focused on improvement expends their energy to facilitate growth within the organization. This focus on growth is expressed in the Transformational and TQM leadership styles.

The third scale, described through the description of leadership styles, presents itself through the servant leadership and multiple styles of leadership presented by Bass and Bass (2008). On one end of the spectrum are leaders who are only concerned with self. These leaders are motivated by a need for power, glory, and a need to create something great as their own legacy. On the other end of the scale are the leaders who are primarily concerned with the welfare and growth of others, and by default or design, the growth of the organization. The selfish leader stands at the top of the successful organization, shouts, "Look what I've created!" and then watches their work dissolve when they are gone. The leader concerned with others stands within the throng of the organization, hears the people yell, "look what we've created!" and sees the work of the organization continue long after they are no longer a part of it. Collins (2001) confirms this in his discussion of Level Five leaders:

...there are two categories of people: those who do not have the seed of Level Five leadership and those who do. The first category consists of people who could never in a million years bring themselves to subjugate their egoistic needs to the greater ambition of building something larger and more lasting than themselves. For these people, work will always be first and foremost about what

they get - fame, fortune, adulation, power, whatever – not what they build, create, and contribute. (p.36)

The three scales are not only present in the previously described models, they are also related to Collins (2001) description of a Level Five leader:

Level five leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level Five leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves (Collins, 2001, p.21).

The Level Five leader is described by Collins (2001) as a mix of professional will and personal humility. Figure 2 gives an overview of the two factors that define a Level Five leader and how those factors are presented through behavior (Collins, 2001, p.36):

Summary: The Two Sides of Level 5 Leadership

Professional Will	Personal Humility
Creates superb results, a clear catalyst in the transition from good to great.	Demonstrates a compelling modesty, shunning public adulation; never boastful.
Demonstrates an unwavering resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult.	Acts with quiet, calm determination; relies principally on inspired standards, not inspiring charisma, to motivate.
Sets the standard of building an enduring great company; will settle for nothing less.	Channels ambition into the company, not the self; sets up successors for even greater success in the next generation.
Looks in the mirror, not out the window, to apportion responsibility for poor results, never blaming other people, external factors, or bad luck.	Looks out the window, not in the mirror, to apportion credit for the success of the company – to other people, external factors, and good luck.

Figure 2. Two sides of level 5 leadership

In his definition we can see elements of self-concern versus concern for others and status quo versus growth. What is less clear is the focus of outcome versus process. While the Level Five is attentive to results, their focus is on changing the organizational system to foster greatness in the organization. Collins (2001) writes of how multiple Level Five leaders initiated incredible change in how a company operated, and how and those leaders did their work was the pivotal factor in the success of the companies they led. Collins (2001) reiterates some of the 14 concepts taught by Deming. While Deming (2015) discusses the elimination of items that detract from the transformation of a company, the Level Five leader must encourage the company to create a culture of self-discipline that “systematically unplugs anything extraneous” (Collins, 2001, p.124). This concept is referred to by Collins (2001) as the hedgehog concept and is another of many parallels between Demings’ theory and Collins’ examination of companies that grew to greater success than they had ever previously known.

Summary

Regardless of the name of the leadership style, the originator who first defined it, and the context in which that definition was created, the characteristics of the styles fit into one of the three scales of focus: Outcome Oriented versus Systems Oriented, Self-centered versus People-focused, and Status Quo versus Improvement. The discussion of the three scales of focus lends a set of criteria to the interview process and helps classify answers that don't fall into one of the leadership styles discussed in this chapter. Though the definitions of the different styles of leadership vary in their description of how the leader behaves, sometimes in a significant way and sometimes not, all present a common thread. A leader who is focused on systems, improvement, and others within the organization will have more success than one who isn't. They also demonstrate that the concept of leadership can be identified and classified in observable behaviors. This study sought to determine how its subjects classify their own behaviors in their self-conceived ideas about their own leadership styles.

Chapter Three

Methods

This study was based upon work from McCauley (2013) and Lee (2010) who examined the perspectives of men and women of color who taught in urban settings. Their work examined Critical Race Theory through the perspectives of practicing educators who hailed from a minority culture and worked in the education system of the United States. Leadership theory and the perspectives of school leaders who are currently working in the field of public education are also examined. The true purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of school leaders in alternative school settings and to bring attention to the perceived similarities and differences between the regular school setting, alternative school settings, and the men and women who lead those schools. While McCauley (2013) and Lee (2010) focused on perceived equity within a minority population of teachers, this study focused on the equity between the regular and alternative school settings. While those studies were a starting point, sample populations, research questions, and interview questions differ.

Chapter three explains the design of the study, a description of the population sample, and provides a list of interview questions. This chapter also explains instrumentation used, method of data collection, and methods used to analyze data. Additionally, chapter three provides limitations for the study.

Research Design

This study used a responsive interview qualitative research design to gather data. Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as "...a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."

Furthermore, Creswell (2009) states that qualitative research, "...honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (p. 232)." Quantitative data is insufficient to tell the personal stories of the human experience. The examination of those collected stories can be done in such a way that allows the identification of a common record. This record is created through collecting words as data and analyzing them through as many lenses as possible (Braun, Clarke, 2013).

As is normal with responsive interviewing, the participants in the study were provided an overview of the researcher and the subject being researched. This overview is provided in the appendix. Simple questions were used first, followed by more complex questions, and all questions were open-ended. This responsive interview process was used to allow the participants to develop a feeling of comfort with the interview process. This attempt at creating comfort was designed to initiate a trusting relationship between the interviewer and subject and gain deeper answers to questions during the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) also wrote that there are guidelines for responsive interviewing that should be followed:

1. Interviewers should gather information about participants' experiences and their interpretations of those experiences.
2. Interviewers must be careful not to interject their own experiences, prejudices and beliefs during the interview process.
3. The interviewer has a moral and ethical responsibility to protect the sensitive information provided by the study participant.

4. The interviewer must be willing to explore additional emergent themes during the interview process. (p.179)

Burkard and Knox (2009) write that qualitative interviews exist on a continuum from the “unstructured approach” that uses an “evolving” set of questions to a very strict process that asks respondents only to answer with a yes or no (p. 2). Responsive interviewing falls in the middle of this continuum. While the questions are created ahead of time, participants are allowed to give answers that are more expansive than a simple yes or no. Structured questions were used in this study in order to create reliability for the research data.

Though Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that follow up questions can be used to explore new, unpredicted themes that emerge during the interview process, this study limited follow up questions. Follow up questions were used to clarify and probe during the interview process. These questions were used to clarify answers for the researcher and to clarify questions for the subjects. Questions were used to probe answers that were lacking in sufficient detail to contribute to the study. Follow up questions are listed in the appendix by the preceding interview question. Limiting follow-up questions allowed the researcher to be emotionally divorced from the interview process and increase data reliability by reducing researcher bias.

Population and Sample

The population for this research study was comprised of building-level, educational leaders in alternative school settings. The sample consisted of men and women ($n = 5$) working in the Central District of the National Alternative Education

Association (NAEA). The researcher employed purposive sampling in order to provide access to a variety of life experiences of interview participants.

Sampling Procedures

An expert panel comprised of current and former public education professionals approved all questions for this study. Panel members were currently working in the field of education and were currently or had recently held responsibilities relating to supervising curriculum, personnel, student services, or programming for an alternative and/or regular school setting. Panel members consisted of two curriculum directors (both former building principals), an educational consultant and former alternative program supervisor, and a student services director/assistant superintendent. Additionally, McCauley, a middle school assistant principal, was asked to participate due to the influence of her work on this study.

Subjects for the study were selected based on his or her current employment status. For the purpose of this study, this status had to be identifiable as a regular school administrator or an alternative school administrator. Interviews were conducted in person. Responses were recorded onto audio files and then transcribed. Emergent themes were identified in the transcriptions and these were coded and analyzed by the researcher. The researcher compared the results of this qualitative study within the alternative and regular school framework established by this study and with the existing body of knowledge on educational and business leadership.

Participants were selected through contact with and membership to the NAEA and through identification in their school districts. Contact was made through the NAEA, school district supervisors, and directly with the participants to solicit participation. The

NAEA and/or school districts, designated them as program directors or principals. Participants varied in years of experience from first year in the current position to 15 years in their current position. Two participants recently accepted leadership positions in alternative schools and were entering their first year as building leader. One participant had four years of experience in the desired position, one participant had six years of experience, and one participant had 15 years of experience in the alternative school setting. All participants were currently employed in the alternative school setting as building leaders.

Potential candidates were contacted via phone and email. Consent forms (Appendix C) were sent to potential candidates who had given verbal or written pledge to participate. Of the five participants who gave a verbal or written commitment, four participated in the study. A list of participants follows with descriptive information. Actual participant names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants.

Rachael is an alternative school principal who has worked in alternative schools her entire career. She is an 18-year veteran and oversees a program that is contracted to service alternative school students in the Kansas City, MO area. Her school is part of a district which educates between 5, 000 and 10,000 students.

David is an alternative school principal who has worked in special education, been an administrator in a regular school setting and is the principal of an alternative school in the Kansas City, MO metropolitan area. His school is part of a district that educates between 10,000 and 20,000 students.

Olivia is an alternative school principal serving her second year as principal in an alternative school in the Kansas City, MO metropolitan area. Her school serves a district of between 10, 000 and 20, 000 students.

Terri is in her second year as an alternative school principal in a small town within 30 miles of the Kansas City, MO metropolitan area. Her school serves a district with less than 5, 000 students.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through emails and face-to-face interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005) write that during the interview process the interviewer should maintain an uninterrupted process that is focused and on topic. Interviewers should listen and probe for more information while maintaining a sense of empathy.

Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend that the interviewer demonstrate interest instead of empathy. Using small, verbal cues like “mm” and “mm-hm” can encourage or discourage the participant during the interview process (Braun & Clarke 2013). Using phrases like, “I know what you mean,” and “the same thing happened to me” can also be encouraging in some instances. However, these statements focus on a sense of empathy and garner trust through the idea of shared ideals and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This can be problematic if the participant begins to discuss topics that the researcher doesn’t agree with and the affirmations cease. In this situation lack of the previously given empathetic responses can cause the participant to shut down (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Every attempt was made during the interview process to solicit deep responses, keep the interview on track, and maintain a trusting relationship with the participants.

Measurement

Interview questions were written and coded to one of 4 research questions. These interview questions were sent, along with the research questions and coding to an expert panel for review. Questions were modified based on panel recommendations and a final copy was sent to the panel members and approved through email communication. In order to ensure sufficient data collection, each research question was represented (coded to) in a minimum of three interview questions.

Interview questions were selected to gather data regarding the perspectives of leaders in urban, alternative school settings. The questions were designed to gather information about participant and school demographics, background knowledge, personal influences and personal experiences. Interview questions focused on personal experience were focused on the perceived role of the principal in the alternative school, factors that determine success, and district support of the building leader. Questions also asked that participants compare their current placement with their perception of a regular school environment.

Responses were compared to others in the sample group along with current literature on effective schools and effective school leadership. Demographic information collected during the interview was also used to organize and analyze data to find trends. Age, years of schooling, years in position, gender, and racial identity were used for this purpose. School district location was considered for use but abandoned in order to maintain confidentiality of participants.

Reliability and Validity

While reliability and validity are terms originating in quantitative research, they can be applied to qualitative research through credibility and dependability. Bloomberg and Volp (2012) write that qualitative research is valid when "...the participants' perceptions match up with the researcher's portrayal of them" (p.112). To ensure validity, the interview data was transcribed and sent to participants for approval. This process of member checking allowed participants to review what they said, how it would be recorded, and confirm their agreement with how the participant's answers were represented.

Member checking was done for this study through email communication and the online sharing of the transcribed interviews. Interviews were transcribed into a digital document with answers categorized by interview question. Participants were then invited to review the digital document and given access to the transcription by the researcher. Participants were encouraged to review their recorded answers and make modifications where they felt necessary. Participants were then asked to notify the researcher when the review was complete. This process allowed the researcher to quickly finalize the interview transcriptions. None of the participants asked to have their answers modified after reviewing the transcription of their interview.

Reliability is established in qualitative research through guarantees within the data collection and analysis process that make the data and findings dependable.

Dependability is created through an "audit trail" (Bloomberg and Volp, 2013, p.113).

The audit trail for this study consisted of email communication with participants, digital

recordings of interviews, interview transcriptions. Reliability was also created by asking each participant the same interview questions with follow-up questions limited to pre-determined questions or times when the participant needed encouragement to give more information with their answer.

Data Collection Procedures

A Proposal for Research was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board prior to the collection of any data for this study (Appendix A). Dr. Tamekia McCauley was contacted via email for permission to use her study on racial equity in public education as a basis for this study. Research and interview questions were created and submitted to Dr. McCauley for review and approval, along with submission to an expert review panel (Appendix B). Participants were emailed consent forms (Appendix C) or forms were delivered to participants in person. The researcher allowed the consent forms to be returned via email, fax, or in person. All participants submitted the consent forms in person. Along with the consent forms, participants were provided the contact information of the researcher. As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013), participants were also provided information regarding the "...scope, and practical and ethical elements of the research..." (p.67). The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and the researcher's own interest in the topic was explained. The researcher created a spreadsheet in order to assign and track pseudonyms of the participants, ensuring confidentiality. Participants were informed of the pseudonym process at the same time they received the consent form. The actual names of the participants never appear in any of the published research.

Participants were supplied the research and interview questions at the same time as the consent forms. This was done in order to begin the trust relationship between researcher and participant. Providing the questions ahead of time also allowed participants time to reflect on their answers prior to the interview and served to keep the interview on track. All participants replied verbally to all questions and their answers were recorded. Two of four participants stated that they had previewed the questions prior to the interview.

A folder system of both digital and physical documentation was used by the researcher to organize research notes and documents from the study. Folders were organized by participant pseudonym. Audio files from the interviews were collected and organized in the same manner. Files were kept secure in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participants were asked to schedule one interview with a possibility of a second if needed. Once this occurred and the interview began, the researcher provided and read the interview protocol to the participants. The interviewer allowed time for the participant to ask any questions and voice any concerns they might have had regarding the interview process and then the interview began.

The researcher began by asking the participant about themselves and their accomplishments and offering background on himself. Then the interview questions were addressed and answers recorded through any combination audio recordings. The researcher limited the interview to one hour and used a clock during interviews to keep track of time.

The second interview was used as a follow-up and served the purpose of expanding the answers of the participants. Second interviews were waived if the answers given by the participant were comprehensive and detailed enough to fully answer the interview questions. Participants were informed about the possibility of not having a second interview when interviews were initially scheduled. No participants needed second interviews but additional information was collected by email correspondence.

After each interview was completed, the researcher transcribed the interview and placed the transcription along with copies of notes in the appropriately labeled file. Transcriptions were made available through online document sharing and participants were emailed notification. Each of the participants was allowed to review and modify the transcript to appropriately represent their truest response to each interview question. Participants were asked not to remove any part of their first response, but instead add to the response in order to clarify or change answers. No participants asked to modify or change their answers. Transcripts were then analyzed according to the research questions for this study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an act that creates order from multiple, disparate, data sets (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In qualitative data analysis, the researcher examines the data and tries to determine what ideas permeate the data set. First the data is classified according to an alphanumeric system. This act is called coding. Once coding is complete, these codes are examined to discover ‘insights’ within the coded transcripts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

This study employed complete coding to identify prevalent themes in participant responses. Braun and Clarke (2013) define complete coding as "...attempting to identify anything and everything of interest or relevance to answering your research question within your entire dataset" (p.206). This was done by examining the interview transcripts, line by line, and identifying any self-presenting themes. Themes were then coded and compared with each other to determine how frequently those themes occurred within the responses.

For this purpose, data sets were loaded into the Dedoose research software program. This allowed the creations of definitions for each code identified in the processing of the data sets. Additionally, Dedoose allowed the analysis of the identified codes and for the comparison of a specific, participant data set to other data sets within the study through the creation of comparison matrices. All data sets were compared with each other through the use of this program. Findings were compared to research presented in the literature review and all findings were presented in Chapter five.

Limitations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) write that "limitations can come from sample size, sample selection, reliance on certain research techniques..., and issues of researcher bias and participant reactivity" (p.114). This study presents a sample selection of less than ten participants who are currently serving as leaders in alternative high schools. It specifically uses the interview for data collection without employing any other method and the researcher was currently a building leader in an alternative school.

Summary

The methods described in chapter three create a structure through which this study explored the self-perceptions of leaders in alternative school settings. The level of equity and structure within the leader's school was also investigated. By using responsive interviewing this study was able to capture the thoughts and perceptions of the participants, creating a clearer picture of what life is like for an alternative school administrator as well as identify traits that are necessary for an alternative school leader.

Chapter Four

Results

This chapter reported the findings of this study. The purpose of this study was to provide a window into the leadership mindsets of alternative school leaders and themes of leadership that alternatives school leaders have in common with regular school principals and with each other. This study may also provide a glimpse, based on the perceptions of alternative school leaders, into what differs in leadership between the two settings.

A secondary purpose of the study was to expose the equity of education between the alternative school and regular school setting. Asking participants to compare their experiences between the alternative school and regular school setting will identify what, if any, the issues are with equitable funding, resource allotment, staffing patterns, and staff training within the alternative school.

This study was grounded in the evolving history of public education, its identified equitable practices, and the study of leadership. Results are examined through the lens of identifying where a participant's response emerged in one of three leadership scales. These scales were Outcome Orientation versus Systems Orientation, Self-Centered versus People Focused, and Status Quo versus Improvement. When themes emerge that connect to these scales a description of this connection is given.

Four Alternative School leaders were chosen for this study. Participants were chosen based only on their professional position of leadership. No consideration was given to years of service, gender, ethnicity, age, or other demographic factors. Likewise,

none of these factors precluded any participant from the research. Table 2 lists the pseudonym of the participant and demographic data pertinent to this study.

Table 2

Participant demographic information

Name	Age	Gender	Racial Identity	Yr ^d
David	44	Male	White	10
Rachael	47	Female	Black	18
Terri	35	Female	White	11
Olivia	38	Female	White	5

Note. ^d Indicates years of administrative experience.

Codes were initially created using research questions as parent themes and interview questions as child themes. Leadership scales discussed in this study were also used. As interview transcripts were examined, other themes emerged and were tied to pre-existing parent themes. In total four parent themes and 31 child themes were created. Because some codes were created from research done via literature review in schooling, equity, and leadership, not all codes appeared in the participant responses. Also all participant's responses placed the self-perceptions of the participants on one side of the three leadership scales discussed earlier. All parent themes were found in the participant responses and 25 of the child themes occurred in responses.

The first parent theme, *Factors that determine pursuit of leadership*, emerged from the first research question and was reinforced through the recounting of subject's early lives and careers. All participants recounted having a *moment of realization*, which emerged as the most commonly occurring child theme for this parent theme. Participants all told stories about how they knew that working in education and working with at-risk

students was something they wanted to do. *Factors and opportunities* also emerged as a child theme as participants discussed events and relationships that led to his or her position of leadership. Though *Background Similarities* emerged with two of the participants, all participants did not share the same kind of life experiences from their early lives, or lives as students, that contributed to his or her pursuit of leadership. The last child theme to emerge was *Why Pursue?* For this theme, the information pulled from the responses resembled *Factors and Opportunities* closely enough that *Why Pursue?* was combined with that theme.

The second parent theme of *Retention of Leadership* emerged from research question number two and included the following child themes: *Impact*, *Intrinsic Rewards*, *Personal Support*, *Regard for School*, and *Student Value*. *Impact* emerged as participants talked about what gave them the most satisfaction and showed up in multiple responses to multiple questions, even when not directly related to the questions given to the subjects. *Impact* centered around the participants' feelings that they effected change in the students, staff, and systems in his or her care. *Intrinsic Rewards* emerged and then combined into *Impact*.

Personal Support also emerged as a child theme dealing with the amount of mentoring and help the leader has from the next, higher level of organizational leadership. *Regard for School* emerged as a way to classify how participants perceived other parts of the organization structure viewed his or her alternative school. *Student Value* emerged as a method to classify discussion dealing with the respondent's discussion of how the district viewed the student population that attended the alternative school.

Parent theme three, *Organizational Structure*, emerged from research question three and had ten child themes. *Academic Interventions*, *Curriculum*, *Technology*, *Funding*, *Level System*, *Personnel*, *Hiring Highly Qualified Staff*, *Maintaining a Highly Qualified Staff*, *Scheduling*, *School Size*, *Student Demographics*, and *Wrap-around Services* all emerged as child themes within *Organizational Structure*. All child themes emerged from discussion tied to a description of the specific alternative school the participant led.

Academic Interventions dealt with systems within the alternative school that allowed the instructors to assist individual students experiencing learning deficiencies or lacking graduation requirements. *Curriculum* was tied to the ability of the alternative school setting to modify the district's curriculum for the entire building based on the needs of the alternative school population. Though *Technology* was created as child theme, it described how technology was utilized as part of a modified curriculum and so was combined with the *Curriculum* theme.

Funding was discussed but was primarily included in themes that occurred regarding *Personal Support*. Discussion of *Funding* emerged as a way the district showed support for the alternative school and the alternative school leader. *Level System* describes the system within the alternative school that grants privileges and determines supports for alternative school students. Only one respondent discussed *Level System* and it is not included in final findings.

Personnel emerged as an important theme and was connected to *Hiring* and *Maintaining*. Demographics, ability to recruit and hire strong candidates, and availability of appropriate staff training, respectively describe these three themes. *Scheduling*

emerged as a way to classify descriptions of how the alternative school day was divided. *School Size* describes the number of students enrolled and maximum possible enrollment in comparison with a regular school setting. *Student Demographics* classifies the racial, gender, and age of the students in the alternative program. *Wrap-around Services* identifies services needed for counseling the mental health of students that are not normally provided by school districts.

Perspectives of Leadership emerged as a parent theme from research question four and child themes emerging from respondent discussion were: *Relationships (People Focused)*, *Soft Skills Instruction*, *Perspective on Similarities*, *Style of Leadership*, *Success Factors*, and *Systems Oriented*. Themes that emerged from literature review but did not emerge from interview responses were: *Outcome Oriented*, *Self-Centered*, and *Status Quo Oriented*.

Being People Focused emerged in the most commonly occurring theme in all interviews of Relationships. These classify the participant's discussion of how they place positive interaction with students and staff at the forefront of his or her daily life at work. While Soft Skills instruction originally emerged through the examination of leadership, responses generally dealt with instructing students in emotional management and social skills. This theme was re-classified as a child theme of Wrap-around Services.

Perspective on Similarities primarily categorized the discussion of the similarities and differences between the alternative school and regular school environment. Style of Leadership emerged as interviewees tied his or her style of leadership to what he or she knew about current leadership styles as they appear in literature. *Success Factors* emerged as a way to categorize discussion regarding what makes a leader successful in

the alternative school but most responses dealt with the respondents' feeling of success. This warranted the reclassification of this theme. The discussion primarily dealt with the subjects' feelings of *Impact*. *Success Factors* was moved to child theme status under *Impact*.

Table 3 describes the emergent parent and child themes. Parent themes are listed in bold and themes with no data associated with them are listed under *No Data*. Responses included an average of 45 themes with a range of 37 to 58. Specific discussion of themes is organized by parent theme and then by most to least commonly occurring child theme. This is done to place the child themes in order of importance to the study.

Table 3

Emergent Parent and Child Themes ^d

Factors that determine pursuit of leadership	Retention of Leadership	Organizational Structure	Perspectives of Leadership	No Data
<i>Factors and Opportunities</i> (4)	<i>Impact</i> (18)	<i>Academic Interventions</i> (4)	<i>People Focused as Relationships</i> (26)	<i>Technology</i>
<i>Leader Backgrounds-similarities</i> (2)	<i>Personal Support</i> (12)	<i>Curriculum</i> (9)	<i>Perspective on Similarities</i> (13)	<i>Outcome Oriented</i>
<i>Moment of Realization</i> (9)	<i>Regard for School</i> (19)	<i>Funding</i> (1)	<i>Style of Leadership</i> (7)	<i>Self-Centered</i>
<i>Why Pursue</i> (3)	<i>Student Value</i> (4)	<i>Level System</i> (1)	<i>Systems Oriented</i> (6)	<i>Status Quo Oriented</i>
		<i>Personnel</i> (3)		
		<i>Hiring</i> (7)		
		<i>Maintaining</i> (6)		
		<i>Scheduling</i> (5)		
		<i>School Size</i> (5)		
		<i>Student Demographics</i> (4)		
		<i>Wrap-around Services</i> (3)		
		<i>Soft Skills Instruction</i> (8)		

Note. ^d the number presented in parenthesis represents the number of occurrences for each theme.

Parent Theme 1: Factors that Determine the Pursuit of Leadership

Participants were asked to describe their early lives, their upbringing and experiences in education. Invariably, all respondents discussed a *Moment of Realization*. As described earlier, this theme categorizes the event or events that led the participant to choose education and/or educational leadership as a career. Some responses indicated early childhood experiences that the educator believed to be of influence in his or her decision and some indicated that the choice was made later on. David cited being surrounded by educators and having a significant teacher who has an incredible impact on him as an elementary student.

I was told in fourth grade by the principal of that school at that time, that I would never graduate high school. That I was one of those kids, that, I don't understand why we waste time on kids like you. I think was the phrase that he used. But I was fortunate that there was a teacher in the building he wanted to get rid of and so he put all four of the troublemaker kids in that teacher's class in the hope that he would get so frustrated that he would quit, or that he would fail so poorly that he could get rid of him. Well the opposite happened.

On both fronts, the guy was phenomenal. Is still a teacher that I talk to, to this day. Was saying things like, 'I teach students not subjects,' 30 years before it was cool to say those things. Not only did I have the best school year of my life, it really turned me around as far as my attitudes and opinions about school. The same for the other three. And all four of us are successful professionals now. All graduated, obviously. But that was a very formative period in my career, in my schooling, because what it showed me was the power of relationship. And the

power of a teacher taking the time to get to know me personally and then tailor what my schooling looked like based on what my needs were.

All participants also cite a moment in their adult life that either reinforced the previous *moment* or came upon their realization while in college. Three of four participants looked at other professions prior to entering education and cite experiences that let them know education was a good fit for them.

Rachael started as an engineer but then transitioned to education after an experience as a math tutor. During her student teaching she realized just how well a career in education fit her:

I went on in school to be an engineer. So while I'm going to school, I decided to tutor on the side. Some friends asked me, 'Hey you know you're good in math so tutor.' So I did. I'm like, 'Ooh, I love this so much better than engineering!' I mean I was good at that, but I loved tutoring. And so that's how I ended up going back to school, ended up going to Park University, finishing up my bachelors in mathematics.

So I was working, a couple jobs, and going to school and as part of my, undergrad at Park, normally they take you to various schools. So you go to private school, public school, alternative school, so I had a chance to go to alternative school. It was an alternative school that contracted with the district, and they served, 9-12. So toured that, fell in love. I told the principal, 'Hey, if you ever have an opening in math, I would love to come work here.' And so about two years later, when I was up at Park, the teacher left! And so the principal called Park university, looking for me. They didn't know my name,

they just knew what I looked like. Well there wasn't that many black female math teachers in the program.

So finally I got the message, called the lady said she said, 'Hey are you still interested?' I said, 'Yeah!' Went in to interview. While I was waiting to interview, there was a crisis going on, the teacher didn't come in, they said, 'Can you teach this math class while we're dealing with this?' So I ended up teaching class. After the day was over they said, 'Well no need to interview you, you survived, the kids liked you, nobody came out the room screaming, you didn't come out the room screaming, do you want the job?' I said, 'Yeah!' and so they hired me as a substitute math teacher until I could finish up my degree. Then I was there, then I was hired as a math teacher.

Olivia discussed how she came to the realization that education was for her while on a break from college. She had also been in a scenario where others were dependent on her for help. She claims that she had been helping others pass a difficult class and a conversation with her mother helped her solidify her decision:

When I came home from college at semester, I just said I kind of think that I want to be a teacher, and my mom said, 'It's about time.' I was like what do you mean it's about time? And she acted like she had been talking to me all along that I should be a teacher, and my favorite elementary teacher told me that I should be a teacher.

I know I don't remember it, like, none of it resonated with me. And she said, 'What classes do you really enjoy?' All I remember talking about was accounting. And she said, 'What was that like?'

It was in that lecture hall so there was probably like 200 people in there. She said, 'What do you like about it?'

I said, 'Well I kind of get excited because like, nobody that I sit next to, none of my friends get it. So I have been, I really, I really have been trying to study and so I go home and try to figure it out so that I can teach them during the next class.'

And she goes, 'You're just trying to figure it out so you can teach your friends. Have you thought about being a teacher before?'

'I have thought about what my classroom would be like.'

'Okay,' she said, 'I think you've thought about this more than you really think you have.'

And I said, 'Well I also remember being in high school. I can really think about that I was in math class and we had a student teacher. And I remember thinking, How does he know what he's going to say?' So remember, this is a high school student, 'Do you have to like, memorize what you going to say when you get up, and how do you know what to say when you teach the class?'

Then to my second-grade teacher Mrs. Edwards. Her because she had beautiful handwriting clean chalkboards and it was immaculate. I think, I really thought, that I was going into education to be because of relationship.

Terri knew she wanted to help people from an early age, but found her niche through her relationship with her high school FACS teacher:

My FACS teacher, I always liked her and I always liked going to school, and helping others learn. But I wanted to teach people, just the process of life and

how to be successful in life. I've always wanted to just help others be better people in their lives. That's why I thought education and the family and consumer science route would be good for me.

Then next child theme *Factors and Opportunities*, presents itself in testimony given that gave the participants the chance to work in the role of teacher or coach, the ability to attend post-secondary education, the subjects' recruitment into administrative roles. All respondents attended college immediately after high school, two report playing college athletics, and all report family support. Olivia reported that her first opportunity was coaching:

I was a sophomore in college as a business major and my friend, and her mom was the athletic director for a nearby school district, and she was like, 'You want to coach anything?' I was like, 'We can coach stuff?' They needed coaches at their Jr. High level. So I started coaching at the local middle school or Junior High, whatever they called it at that time. They needed me to coach boys basketball. I was like, 'You're crazy,' but I did it.

Terri discussed a conversation she had with her building administrator after starting her masters in Educational Leadership:

Once I started my Masters, one of my principals said, 'You know, have you ever thought about going into administration?'

And so I said, 'Well, I'm getting my masters in that.'

And she said, 'I think you should apply for this job that's open near here.' So I did in my third year of teaching and I got the assistant principal job there.

Why the subjects pursued a position of leadership also emerged in two of the interviews in the theme *Why Pursue?* David told why he decided to seek a leadership position by stating it gave him the ability to affect more people and more students. Olivia cited knowing it was time when she felt like she had to keep reminding herself she wasn't the principal and that she just felt ready:

It was the dance that you have to remember that you're the assistant principal.

And it was like, 'I think it's time to start looking you know?' And it was a good thing for me because my principal let me work a hundred percent in my strengths, and gave me a lot of leadership in the building. I got to the point where, I've been doing this, like, 'I'm ready.'

Leadership Backgrounds-similarities only presented in two of the respondents interviews and in only two places in those testimonies. While similarities exist between respondents, these similarities presented themselves in other themes more appropriately. Due to the lack of interview material supporting this theme, it is not a theme that showed significance in this study as a stand-alone theme.

For the first parent theme of *Factors that Determine Pursuit of Leadership*, the *Moment of Realization* is the primary theme to emerge. This moment is either a single incident to which the participants can point or a series of events that culminated through a conversation with someone who impacted the subject.

Parent Theme 2: Retention of Leadership

Retention of Leadership dealt primarily with the conditions that might contribute to a participant staying in his or her alternative school position. Interview questions related to this theme dealt primarily with equity and four of four respondents' answers

reported that they clearly felt supported by the district administration. *Regard for school* emerged as the most commonly occurring theme followed closely by *Impact*. *Personal Support* was the third most commonly occurring child theme and *Student Value* had the least amount of discussion. However, Student Value can be indirectly seen through the support demonstrated for the administrator and the school he or she leads. A district that does not value at-risk students most likely will not finance an alternative school appropriately or support the administrator assigned there.

Regard for school is demonstrated in the ability of the school leader to contact organizational leadership and get a positive response to the needs of the individual school. Terri reported that she has experienced positive response from district administration and other building administrators regarding changes she felt needed to occur:

Yes, I mean definitely, with what I believed the students needed with flexible learning environment. They have got them new computers because I said, ‘Why would they, why are we not getting them laptops and new computers like they would anybody else?’ We, I make sure that any big event, like student picture day, we take our kids up there. We have a bus that will travel our kids anywhere we want to go. Everyday. Throughout the day.

Last year they had cold lunches delivered to them. I talked with one of the elementary schools near and said, ‘Could we try, I mean, just put a table out in the hallway, but if we could just walk through the line, our kids are going to be good. We’ll set up expectations, they know that this is, one strike you’re out, so we can have hot meals.’ And we’ve been doing it, it’s been successful, we go at a certain

time, so the district, as a whole has been working together now that the administrators are making sure that the administrators have been coming down. I have a calendar that they're coming down on a regular basis to make connections with these students and that they see that they're still part of a bigger system, than just, 'We're alone.' And so they sign up at a certain time to come down. Like I just had two visit this morning. So I do believe they provide the need and if not then we will find a way to get what they need.

Rachael also reported support directly from the superintendent of schools but said that because her alternative school is contracted to the district, a different level of support exists than the other three participants reported:

No I would say no. All other schools have security officers. I get an officer that sits in the parking lot in between, as the kids are, one is leaving one is coming in. But I have a wand, I have a security wand. So when it comes to safety, we're the safety. There are sometimes, and I deal with the kids that they can't handle. But you sent them all to the same place and expect that I will work miracles. I do now, I want you to know that. When it comes to that, it's just a different mindset. Why wouldn't it be the same here? That's my processing.

Impact is the second most commonly occurring child theme under *Retention of Leadership*. All four respondents discussed the impact he or she is able to have on students, the freedom he or she has to make modifications to scheduling, curriculum, and other school systems. Terri reported the following regarding preventing students from dropping out:

We have a number of dropout students that have dropped out and then came back. Not to toot my own horn, but 3 of them came back because they knew I would be here. Because they had been here before and they were not going to come back to this building. But once they learned that I would be here, they're here. One of them is from the Juvenile system and the other two are just dropouts that they can do this, and so, and they attend every day.

Olivia reported that work in the alternative school yields quicker dividends than her work in the regular school setting. The difference she is able to make is easier to see: Oh well, your heart gets paid back faster and more often than it does in the regular setting. I wasn't at the high school I was at the middle school. But I just, it's just amazing. The day we started the, the ah, level system, I had a girl who was very angry, she ended up throwing a nameplate at me. Because I told her the next day she can't miss. So she throws a nameplate and, I don't know, not even close to me, she needs to work on her aim. But anyway the next day totally different she comes in, she gives me a hug, you know it's like, 'Nice win Olivia.' I love it.

I said, 'Shelly, can I tell you why you were so mad at me yesterday?'

She goes, 'Why?'

I said, 'Because when your mom came, you thought your mom was going to be on your side and what happened was your mom was on my side and that really, really made you mad.'

She said, 'How'd you know that?'

I said, 'I was sixteen once too.'

So she was like, 'Oh my gosh I'm so sorry.'

Personal Support shows as the next commonly occurring child theme. It characterizes the larger district's responsiveness to the personal needs of the administrator in the alternative school. Examples include the influence of pre-existing relationships and actions by the district that encourage the alternative school administrator when he or she is making changes.

David describes how relationships that pre-existed his alternative school leadership have helped him make the transition:

But because of those relationships, I knew going in that I would be supported.

The two guys that are my direct bosses were both middle school principals when I was teaching, so I already had some relationships there that were, that I knew would be supportive relationships. Since the day I was hired it's been everything I expected it to be. I can call and ask questions when I need and I'm comfortable doing that. I know sometimes that can be a little uncomfortable. An example is leave forms. 'We'll talk you through it.' It's been great.

Terri describes how the district supported changes she wanted to make to the alternative program that she perceived were essential in created a successful environment:

Since this is my first year, right now, I just tell them what I need, put in a requisition for what I need and I've been given what I need. But, like we remodeled this this summer, but that was part of my proposal, if I was to take this job. This office wasn't here, the bar area wasn't there, it was all closed up, it just was very imprison-like. And so we remodeled and all this flexible seating was sent here and I think it's changed the dynamic.

Student Value represented how the population of students was perceived by the rest of the district. Three out of four respondents discussed this child theme. All participants who discussed this theme made statements that communicated high regard for his or her student population and support from the district demonstrates the importance of all students. David stated:

Because we talk about, we talk about kids every week. So issues are always brought up. So we add it to the next faculty meeting or we need to get some PD on that so...And the district is supportive of these things. I had a meeting with assistant superintendent this morning. I said, 'I've got these two things, what do you think?'

'Do what you gotta do.'

'Alright, that's what I needed.' It's a cool environment to be in. I think they get and understand how dynamic our population of kids is.

The testimonies of the participants qualified in Retention of Leadership indicate while some problems exist, overall, the alternative school enjoys positive and supportive regard within the district. Leaders within the alternative school experience support from his or her district level administration, and they feel what they do impacts students in ways a regular school cannot. The findings of this study indicate that the alternative schools and their leaders must maintain flexibility, but that issues regarding equity do not present themselves in the perceptions of study participants.

Parent theme 3: Organizational Structure

Organizational Structure emerged as a parent theme based on literature regarding regular and alternative school settings. Through the examination of these settings, we can determine similarities and differences between the student experience in one setting versus the other. The participants discussed multiple factors that contribute to these differences and some that were the same. Even when the conditions were overtly the same, such as the same opportunity to hire staff as the regular school administrators, they were afforded the freedom to hire someone who was the best fit based on soft skills the candidate brought to the table.

The most commonly occurring child theme was *Curriculum*. Alternative school administrators are able to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of the students in their care. Often this is done through the use of technology, but it also happens through the diagnostic instruction of the teachers within the program. Rachael discussed the curriculum as being modified to completely match the needs of the learner and maintain his or her privacy:

It gives me flexibility. For instance, I have an 11th grader, he's reading on a second grade level. I can be a little bit flexible versus the teacher in the regular classroom. She's teaching it one way and if the kid doesn't get it, we're moving on. So I can continue to work with a kid and he can work at his own pace. He may just, in one content area, he may just move right through it. But he may struggle in the other, like reading or the Language Arts, he may struggle in that. So I can help him build those skills. So even though he's here, you know, for the four hours, I can say today we're just going to focus on your English. We're

going to work on that reading skill. So it gives me the flexibility to meet the kid and work with the kid to get that skill.

Olivia discusses creating a class specifically to work on problem solving and soft skills needed for 21st century industry:

We were able to write a new course just for our school where we use the Stanford design thinking process. This course will use the Stanford design thinking process and we partner with area businesses. This is the third quarter we've done it and we take it from the Missouri Career Clusters. We take a different cluster for each quarter. Right now they're in Engineering or Industrial Technology and the business partner comes up with a problem they're really trying to fix and then our kids work in a group to do that.

The next most commonly occurring child theme is *Personnel*. Though by itself, *Personnel* does not show up as frequently as some other themes, the child themes assigned to personnel, *Hiring* and *Maintaining*, gave it high frequency of appearance. Alternative school leaders in the study report the same opportunities to hire personnel as the other school administrators in his or her district and are limited only in school size. The participants report hiring for soft skills as is evidenced in the response of David:

Several years back it was determined we needed a social worker in our building to help our families and our kids with all their various needs. District supported that. It's now a community liaison position because the guy we hired was the absolute right fit. He didn't have the licensed clinical component to be the certified social worker he's working on that. At one point I went back and said, this is the guy we need in our program.

Rachael reported seeing a difference in the disposition between teachers and looks for candidates who she thinks will be able to manage relationships well and fill a gap in the lives of her students:

The demographics of the staff. Right now I have three males and one female. Two African American males, one white male, and one black female. And so from my previous life in my other school, I had more males than females. And it was intentional. And I look for staff members who represented the students. Some people would disagree with that, but the reason why I went that direction was because there were, our babies did not see males. They came from homes where there were no males, and so they would tell you, 'Oh, I don't like men, I've never seen a real man. Only men I've ever seen is the one standing on the corner, or soliciting me to do things.' And so, how do I bridge that? They have to be able to see those individuals in their lives, and if education is the only way to do that, that's my means of helping them one way, but then on the other side, they need to see professionals.

Maintaining appeared as the ability of the administrator to present professional development to his or her staff as needed. This occurs through the administrator's ability to have time to personally help problem solve and his or her access to training. Terri stated that she is still part of the teaching staff and has received training in Conscious Discipline specifically for her work in the alternative school. David discussed how a sense of ownership helps him maintain staff:

This environment is very unique, in that, just as an example, I had a Social Studies position open and I had over 90 applicants for my alternative Social

Studies position. I had an assistant principal position open I had over 70 applicants for it. We get, people understand, that in this program, it's a very different feel. And that was created by the former principal, and now I'm the steward of that moving forward and keeping that environment to where people want to be here. I get to pick great teachers, and great assistant principals. My assistant's been a teacher in this building for 10 years prior to making that move. You know it's a luxury I know but to keep those people here...they've got to feel like they've got ownership in this program and so that's why, it's kind of that full circle thing for me.

Scheduling, School Size, and Student Demographics, though present in the majority of the responses, do not give particular insight into the participants' leadership perspectives. They also do not differ significantly from the descriptions of alternative school environments described in literature. Alternative schools serve a smaller population with a set of specific needs. Leaders in the study have influence over the school scheduling but don't control every aspect of the way the day is divided. Rachael discusses her day:

We have three sessions per day. We have high school kids in the morning, then we have middle schoolers, and then in the late afternoon we have another high school group.

Olivia reported that the majority of her students are made from the at-risk population of the district:

I would say that you know when you talk about your super subgroup being more at risk than the other population I would say we probably have at least double that

subgroup here. Now I only take up to 90 kids in our main program, and I don't have any SPED. And I don't have any English Language Learners so we're really talking about the free and reduced population and really African American. We are usually pretty 50/50 and boys and girls but I think we do have more boys this year.

Terri reported the number of students in her program and their demographics.

Her program also serves as home for students on out of school suspension (OSS):

We have two elementary kids, out of those students we have two elementary, the rest of them are high school students. We just had 3 more, they were middle school students, they were for OSS. So we serve district OSS if they get 5 or more (days of OSS). We have a, one of ours is a high school student. He has a 10 day out right now so he's on his sixth day. So he will transition back in 4 days.

Though all programs represented vary in student numbers, all are close to a ten student to one teacher ratio. All participants seemed to accept the numbers and demographics of students in their program without statements during interviews that demonstrated any dissatisfaction with their enrollment.

The last child theme under *Organizational Structure* is *Wrap Around Services*. This theme represented the resources attained through other agencies or a focus by the school personnel on the social-emotional welfare of the students educated in each program. The only leader not to specifically mention gaining resources for Wrap-around Services for her school was Terri, whose school only serviced eight students at the time

of the interview. Even she cited the use of Conscious Discipline and teaching strategies to help with behavioral triggers and to help calm a student in crisis:

I've never worked with elementary kids, and so, we have one that stopped taking her medicine and running all over the place, and jumping on the trampoline yelling poop, poop, poop, poop. You know? Or whatever, and I have found such great success in finding those triggers that make her mad and then getting over there and using conscious discipline and saying, 'Ok, breathe with me. Let's go over to the safe spot, and breathe.' And holding her hands or just giving her a hug. And it stopped. There hasn't been a destroying, there could have been but you just have to be on your toes 24/7. To see what triggers are happening anywhere. Even with my high school kids as in, 'Uh, let's go take a walk.'

Other leaders presented information about additional personnel or community agencies taking an active role in the school day. Rachael discusses how important these resources are to the success of the student:

I look for community agencies. I have kids that are 17 years old, you know they want a job. I can't get there so if I can help them and bring in people... We work on skill sets here, on top of you have your eight classes plus I'm working on other things. I have a counselor here, he's not your average counselor, he can do it, but he's more so mental health. So today we had a young lady who had possibly been engaged in some rough...and we had to have the grandma come in. We talked about her and what had been shared and we told grandma what she needed to do. These are some options in the community, these are some places that will help

you. So bridging those needs with community agencies is what I've done. That's because that's who I am and that's what I know needs to be done.

Each participant worked to modify the *Organizational Structure* for the specific needs of his or her population of students. This was done through modifying *Curriculum*, *Hiring* and *Maintaining* qualified staff, modifying the academic schedule (*Scheduling*), and by providing *Wrap-Around Services*. These common practices indicate the alternative school leader is someone who, when weighed on the scale of improvement versus status quo, is focused on improvement of the organization and the care of the whole child.

Parent Theme 4: Perspectives of Leadership

After equity, self-perceptions of leadership was the purpose of this study. All participants in the study were pointedly questioned about their style of leadership but no pre-existing type of leadership from literature was consistently named as a common type of leadership style. However, self-perceptions did describe each leader on the positive side of each of the three leadership scales of Outcome Orientation versus Systems Orientation, Self-Centered versus People Focused, and Status Quo versus Improvement.

As can be seen in Table 2, *Outcome Orientation*, *Self-Centeredness*, and *Status Quo* did not emerge as themes in any of the answers from any respondent. Though at times they discussed situations that could be interpreted as one of these three themes, the discussion is so heavily couched in another theme, that the testimony of the leader is not categorized with one of these themes.

People Focused is the most commonly occurring theme in the answers of each participant. It is more clearly defined in the *Relationships* theme. The theme is the most

commonly occurring theme and appears in so many of the participants' testimonies that it is hard to separate *Relationships* from other themes. It is clear from this study that a primary perception of the alternative school leader is that they focus on relationships and people.

Terri described repairing a relationship with one of her students after she realized she had triggered an escalation in him of negative behavior:

So I felt like I failed at that time but he came back that day, and he's like, 'I just needed a break.' And we processed, and we did a little lap and we walked. And I told him I was open about myself. I said, 'I have a lot of pressure on myself, you know, and maybe how I approached you in the morning, by saying make sure you're being respectful, was a little in the wrong way.' So I apologized and he apologized and that was that.

Olivia reported the difference between her setting and that of the regular school through the personal relationships she is able to create with her students, knowing each one by name:

I know all of them where in the Middle School when there's six to nine hundred kids you know. You know faces and you know names of a lot of them but I didn't know names of, you know, I probably didn't know names of half of them.

David reported that taking the time to spend with each kid when they have gotten in trouble has changed the climate of his building and decreased discipline incidents:

We ended up reducing discipline by 73%. That was not just me, but it was our staff being ready for something different. Simply taking the time to talk to kids about what they were doing and why they were doing it. Every time they came to

the office was an opportunity for me to teach and correct, as opposed to just throwing a consequence at them. I don't believe that you can punish a kid enough to change their behavior.

Rachael refers to her students as her babies and states the purpose of education is to find whatever works for each student:

Just because this baby did not fit in this peg hole, what's to say that that's where he or she needs to be, and that's the best learning environment. Because education is supposed to bring about knowledge. It's supposed to be about this kid, finding the best way to help this kid learn. That's what I think a teacher, and that's what I think our role is as adults in education. Is finding the best suitable learning environment that works for the kid. There are times when people see that and don't agree. But that's my philosophy and belief when it comes to education and leadership.

Systems Oriented focus is discussed by David and Terri, but is also present in the earlier themes established for Olivia and Rachael. For Olivia, developing a course to partner with local businesses and for Rachael, running three schools a day through her program are examples of how they modify the system of education to create effective educational practice for their student populations.

For David, being systems oriented means looking to the future anchored in the needs of the students in his district. His perception was that his model would allow more students to be affected by his program and for students to be placed where they could receive the appropriate supports:

I'd love to see us as a district do an upper elementary/middle school combined alternative setting. Because I think that would be a better fit programmatically for our middle school kids. But we did some things this year to kind of separate that program, so that those kids are getting a little bit more of a middle school experience, versus having them run around the halls with high school kids and they're just immature and not ready for it so sometimes it leads to some... They make bad choices because they feel pressured to do so.

Terri discussed how the physical layout of her building was not conducive to the education of her students and how she worked to transform the setting to facilitate the implementation of a successful program:

If I was to take this job, I wanted a remodel. This office wasn't here, the bar area wasn't there, it was all closed up, it just was very imprison-like. And so we remodeled and all this flexible seating was sent here and I think it's changed the dynamic.

Other than describing behaviors that stand in one of each of the scales, two respondents cited Transformational Leadership, one cited Servant Leadership, and one labeled his self-perception as Collaborative. Overall, alternative school leaders in this study expend his or her emotional and intellectual capital on people (especially students), revising systems, and on a constant push for improvement.

Summary

Four alternative school leaders volunteered for this study and the responses gained from their interviews along with research in literature led to the creation of over 30 themes. Certain themes can be identified by the number of times they emerge in the

study as important indicators regarding the perceptions of the leaders in this study. Participants described factors that led them to education, differences in the structures within his or her school, what gives him or her satisfaction and makes him or her feel supported, and information that leads to conclusions about how they perceive their own leadership behaviors. Final discussion of the findings of this study are described in chapter five along with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

Chapter five consists of an interpretation of data related to the research questions for this study. It is organized by each research question and the significant data collected from qualitative interviews and from the review of literature is discussed as it relates to each research question. It also contains an overview of the problem researched, the purpose statement, a listing of the research questions, and a review of the methodology for this study. Major findings from both the research conducted by the researcher through interviews and literature is discussed as well as recommendations for future research. Final remarks are included at the end of the chapter.

Study Summary

The study summary presents the process used to determine the course of research for this study on self-perceptions of alternative school leaders. It includes the overview of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and a review of methodology. The overview and purpose statement offer an explanation for why this study was conducted, while the review of methodology describes how it was conducted.

Overview of the problem. This study primarily sought to determine those administrative similarities and differences. By examining the self-perceptions of leaders in alternative schools regarding their own leadership philosophies and practices, the study sought answers regarding what leaders in the alternative school setting do that they feel makes him or her successful. As literary research indicates, a secondary problem of equity can exist when students are separated from the regular school setting. This study also tried to determine whether or not leaders in alternative schools felt that they and their

students were held in the same regard as students and administrators in the regular school setting.

Purpose statement and research questions. Leadership is a key ingredient to the success of any organization. Without the right kind of leadership, an organization finds itself stagnant and unproductive. The organization may spend time putting out whatever immediate problems present themselves instead of holding fast to the organizational vision and moving consistently forward. Quality of school leadership is second only to teacher quality when considering school improvement (Hechinger 2011). This study sought to provide a window into the leadership mindsets of alternative school leaders and identify the elements of leadership that alternative school leaders have in common with regular school principals and with each other. This study also sought to provide a window into what differs in leadership between the two settings.

A secondary purpose of the study was to attempt to expose the equity of education between the alternative school and regular school setting. Asking subjects to compare their experiences between the alternative high school and regular school setting was done to identify what, if any, the issues are with equitable funding, resource allotment, staffing patterns, and staff training within the alternative school. Separate is not equal. This study sought data to determine whether or not that saying applies to the alternative school setting.

To drive the course of the study, the following research questions were used:

RQ1. To what extent are factors that influence a person to pursue leadership in an alternative educational setting similar to factors that influence the pursuit of leadership in a regular school setting?

RQ2. To what extent are factors similar between an alternative and regular school setting that influence a leader to remain in or leave that setting?

RQ3. To what extent is the organizational culture similar or different between alternative and regular school settings?

RQ4. To what extent do individual perspectives of leadership resemble each other or differ between the alternative and regular school settings?

Review of methodology. This study used a responsive interview qualitative research design to gather data. Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as "...a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Furthermore, Creswell (2009) states that qualitative research, "...honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (p. 232)." Quantitative data is insufficient to tell the personal stories of the human experience. The examination of those collected stories can be done in such a way that allows the identification of a common record. This record is created through collecting words as data and analyzing them through as many lenses as possible (Braun, Clarke, 2013).

Over 30 themes emerged as the interview transcripts were examined. Participants were allowed ample response time and given prompts to answer interview questions completely. After each interview was conducted, transcripts were analyzed according to research questions, interview questions, and themes that emerged through literature review and common responses. Together, the most common themes describe the mindsets of the interview participants and, by design, the mindset of the alternative school leader.

Major Findings

Responses that led to the creation of parent themes and child themes were organized according to the interview and research question. Factors that determine the pursuit of leadership, factors that led to the subject seeking to retain his or her alternative school leadership position, the organizational structure of the alternative school, and perspective of the participant's leadership style all led to the creation of themes within the research.

All participants shared experiences within an educational context that led to the participant seeking a position in education and/or leadership. These events occurred at different times in his or her life but all scenarios presented and enforced the idea that the participant wanted, and would be good at, a career in education. These events occurred at different times in the lives of respondents, some were young when the impact was made and some were adults, but all reported that these events were factors that determined a future in education.

Each respondent also reported that he or she was presented with an empowering opportunity for leadership. This juncture in the life of the leader gave each the chance to work in a leadership role and be seen by others while he or she did that work. Three interviewees served as administrative personnel in regular school settings prior to alternative school placement and one worked her way up through the ranks of alternative school teachers to be selected as a replacement for the prior principal. In all cases, another leader saw ability within the participant and took steps to make sure that ability was cultivated. Though this theme does not occur as often in the research as others it is significant because all participants have a story regarding this type of mentorship.

Though there is research focused on why employees stay with a company or in a given job, the purpose of research question two was to determine if participants felt his or her school and position was treated with equity by the district they served. Three themes emerged as significant due to the number of occurrences in the responses of the participants. The district's regard for school had the highest number of items occurring. Responses centered around the support the district provides for the alternative school and was overwhelmingly positive. Only one respondent indicated that her school was not given the same regard as others in the district, but that same respondent reported a high level of personal support from district administration.

All respondents felt that the district regarded the alternative school as important and that support was shown through funding and personal presence. Though funding did not match that of the high schools in any of the districts, it was reported to be sufficient for the work that was being done and the number of students being served. Responsiveness to needed repairs, remodeling, and special transportation also indicated a commensurate level of support.

Support for the individual alternative school administrator was also reported to be equitable. District office employees visited alternative school sites, relationships with district administration were positively reported, and personal requests were often granted for each participant. These conditions indicate that, overall, there is equity in regard for the alternative school administrator.

A third theme to emerge at a high rate was the amount of impact the leader felt he or she had on the success of students in his or her school and the systems of the school. While this theme does not relate to equity, it is the primary reason the participants cited

for job satisfaction. Each reported that he or she was able to positively impact students, staff, and school systems on a regular and ongoing basis. It was important to each leader to know what he or she did each day had an impact on the lives of those in the organization.

Findings Related to Literature

When examining the organizational structure of the alternative schools in which the participants served, the issue of inequity did not emerge. This question was designed to lead to the determination of systems breakdowns that would indicate inequitable practices and facilities within the alternative schools. What was revealed instead was the predisposition of each alternative school leader to facilitate or create organizational structures to more effectively educate alternative school students. Themes emerged from the research which presented the freedom given to each participant to modify curriculum, scheduling, and staffing based on emerging school needs. In one instance, that of the contracted alternative school, staffing was discussed as an issue. In other cases, when staff were full members of the district human resource capital, staffing was discussed as an opportunity to apply the freedom of the leader's personal decision making. In the case of the contracted school, the primary issue discussed was the inequity in pay. Even in this case, the administrator was able to discuss the years of experience possessed by each of her teachers in a positive light.

Student demographics varied from one district to another and did not emerge as an indicator that one subgroup was enrolled in the alternative school more often than another. While one school's population had a representation of the district's percentages, one had a majority of minority population. Another had a population that was too small

to indicate equity or inequity. In all cases, the population of the alternative school and alternative classrooms was smaller than those in the regular school setting. While this is viewed as important for the success of the alternative school, if any inequity is indicated by findings related to enrollment, the only consistent finding is that the inequity leans in favor of the alternative school. All leaders reported a much lower teacher-student ratio than is present in the regular school setting.

Student support services are also themes that emerge as significant. Whether the school was large enough to staff specifically for emotional/mental health and academic interventions, or the school was small enough in scale that the participant provided those interventions on her own, these were present in all systems represented by the study participants.

The last research question related to perspectives of leadership was designed to solicit information from the participant that would lead to a single category of leadership. This singular category would have applied to each participant and been used to label specific dispositions common for all participants. However, what emerged was not a single category of leadership, such as transformational, but leadership tendencies that connected with successful leadership behaviors from the literature review on leadership.

All participants discussed how relationships made them feel fulfilled, how those relationships were important to student learning, and how relationships made them feel they were part of the larger organization. These pieces of testimony connected directly to a focus on people instead of a focus on the self. Participants primarily discussed relationships with students and because of this, a focus on student relationships emerged as a significant self-perception for all participants. It is this focus on students and their

needs that emerged overwhelmingly and was a thread that wove itself through so many of the responses to other questions given by the school leaders in this study. It is this overwhelming discussion of relationships that causes this theme to be labeled as the primary factor in alternative school leadership.

Participants also consistently discussed improvements and changes he or she had helped facilitate within the organization. These changes occurred throughout the organizational structure of the school. The appearance of this leadership focus throughout other answers leads to the conclusion that a focus on improvement is only secondary to that of relationships.

The third leadership behavior that emerged was a consistent focus on systems instead of outcomes. Though all participants voiced the goal of helping students be successful, success was presented differently based on the students who were being discussed. Not all responses were linked to a focus on systems, but the converse of systems focus, outcome focused, had zero emergent connections. Collins writes the Level Five leader must encourage the company to create a culture of self-discipline that “systematically unplugs anything extraneous” (Collins, 2001, p.124). This unplugging relates to the systems of the organization. Deming (2014) claims that if an organization is to be successful, it has to move away from a focus on outcomes and performance goals. If the data collected can be used as an indicator, it indicates that the alternative school leader is driven to revise systems to make them more conducive rather than driven towards meeting a predetermined quota of success.

Conclusions

Research related to this study indicated that equity issues have existed within United States public education. Works cited in the literature review discussed the evolution of systems within public education as well as the integration of minority students, racial minority and disabled, into the fold of public education. While the demographic of students found in a public education classroom has changed significantly since the first public schools, the machine of public schooling remains unchanged since the early 1900s.

The history of public education is benchmarked by the struggle for equity. While the public school setting was significantly impacted by the idea that separate is not equal, the story of alternative education presented by this study is one of equitable treatment. If this study can be used as an indicator of what should be done regarding public education and alternative education, the continuing implementation of equitable alternative schools should occur. It is the belief of the participants of this study that the setting of the alternative school is not only equitable, it impacts students in ways that are more effective than a regular school environment. The testimonies related to this study show that while the alternative school may not be equal in all things, it is treated in such a way that equity is achieved.

The study of leadership has changed and the current literature points to successful leadership behaviors that can be emulated and replicated. Leadership in the public school setting has changed also. From no management except for the tutor or teacher in the small school setting, to the leadership mechanism we have in place today consisting of district and building level leadership, school leadership has evolved. This study showed

that some business models for leadership can be applied to the alternative school setting. Models which represent a focus on people, a focus on improvement, and a focus on systems versus the self, status quo, and quotas, mirror the leadership behaviors that are represented in the responses of the participants. These self-perceptions created a framework for alternative school leadership that is defined by relationships, evolution in practice, and the consistent evaluation of effective systems.

Implications for action. As the state driven quotas for school success continue to place pressure on the public school system, a need arises to address the next generation of minority demographic. This demographic, because of the diversity of causes present within it, can only be defined as at-risk youth. Districts are finding that an effective way to educate these students is to allow them to attend a school where, instead of a focus on test scores, the focus is on relationships, innovation, and effective systems. This focus is communicated by the small size, the relationship driven leader, support services, and innovative programs present in these settings.

If school districts are to truly educate all students, certain aspects of those districts must continue to cater to the needs of the new few. While students with disabilities and minorities have been guaranteed equitable services, the at-risk student still struggles within the regular school environment. Providing these students innovative and prescriptive learning; a significant and caring adult relationship; and services that support the welfare of the whole child within the school setting is the answer that is presented by this study. This solution is characterized by the self-perceptions of the participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study did not explore data related to alternative schools, what data is tracked, and how that data is reported. Because it was an exploration into the perceptions of school leaders through qualitative study, it does not indicate the characteristics of a successful alternative school. It also does not characterize what factors lead to the success of an alternative school student from a student perspective. This study doesn't represent the impact on student learning an alternative school might have based on pre and post enrollment data or the self-perceptions of leadership regular school administrators might have. All of these gaps present themselves as topics for future research.

This study also focused on a small number of participants and the stories presented by interview responses. Increasing the size and scope of the study by using more participants might reinforce findings or present different information than what is discussed in this study. Likewise examining building leadership from the perspective of students and faculty serving with a particular alternative school leader might allow cross analysis of self-perceptions. This cross analysis might indicate whether or not a building leader has an image of his or her leadership that is accurate.

An additional level of examination might be done to include district level personnel in the examination of alternative school leadership. Seeking to understand why a superintendent or director chose an alternative school leader might help determine if consistency exists in the recruitment of this particular brand of leadership. Combining multiple facets from a more comprehensive examination of alternative schools could

allow researchers to create a framework for the creation and staffing of an effective alternative school.

While this study examined perspectives of leaders regarding organizational structure in the alternative school setting, the focus was never purely on the structures within that setting. A closer examination of the organizational structures of a larger group of alternative school settings might reveal key similarities in those structures regarding student and instructional systems.

Concluding Remarks

The self-perceptions of alternative school leaders were examined in this study. This was done to determine if common behaviors existed between study participants. Findings indicate that alternative school leaders focus on relationships, innovation, and revision of systems. Through the interview process the participants described what led them to public education and educational leadership. Interviews indicated equity in the alternative school environment, a high level of perceived impact on student success, and a high regard for alternative school leaders and students. Overall, the image created by the participants was one of an effective public education tool. This tool assists students who are becoming more important to each school district represented.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Request

The following summary must accompany the proposal. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience, and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm. Careful attention to the following may help facilitate the review process:

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The purpose of this study is to determine the leadership and equity perspectives of principals in alternative schools through the examination of literature and qualitative research. This study uses literature to create a brief description of the evolution of alternative schools and key elements of school leadership. Alternative school principals will be interviewed and responses will be analyzed for similarities and differences to determine trends, organizational structure, and leadership characteristics.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There are no special conditions or manipulations in this study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

The study will use the qualitative interview to collect data. Interview questions are attached. There is no risk of psychological damage.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

There is no stress to subjects in this study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way.

Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

Only information linked to the professional lives of the subjects will be collected. There will be no information collected that is personal or sensitive.

Will the subjects be presented with materials that might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

No information presented to subjects will be offensive, threatening, or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Approximately one hour will be allotted for the interviewing of subjects.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

The participants in this study are principals and administrators of alternative schools in Northwest Missouri and the Kansas City, MO area. Participants will be provided questions prior to the interview process and told that their participation in the study is strictly voluntary, that it will take approximately one hour, and that a transcript of the interview will be provided to him/her for review. Each participant will be told that they may opt out of the study at any time.

What steps will be taken to ensure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

Participants can opt in or out of the study at any time.

How will you ensure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

Consent forms will be used and a copy is attached.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No data will be part of any permanent record that will put the subjects at risk for identification.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

No record will be kept of non-participants. Participants will be told that there is no penalty for partial completion of any interview question or for discontinuing the interview at any point.

What steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data?

All participants will be given a code and a pseudonym when the data for the study is reported.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved in the study.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

No data from files or archival data will be used.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. Please start by talking about your own background – How you grew up and your own schooling experiences. (RQ 1)
2. Literature on leadership tends to categorize styles of leadership. What style of leadership do you strive to emulate and why? (RQ 1)
3. Why did you decide to become an educator? (RQ 1)
4. Why did you pursue a position of leadership? (RQ 1)
5. What opportunities and factors led you to pursue a leadership position in an alternative school environment? (RQ 1)
6. Describe the demographic population of the students who attend your institution compared to a regular education setting. (RQ 3)
7. Describe the demographic population of the faculty who are employed by your institution. (RQ 3)
8. Describe the similarities and differences between your educational setting and that of the regular school environment. (RQ 3)
 - a. If needed: How are educational processes the same or different?
 - b. If needed: How is funding the same or different?
 - c. If needed: How is maintaining a highly qualified staff the same or different?
9. Describe your experience being a leader in this setting. (RQ 4)
10. Has the school made deliberate efforts to embrace the needs of its student population? Explain. (RQ 4)
11. Do you believe your school is afforded the same regard as others in your district? Explain. (RQ 2, 3)
12. Do you feel your leadership role is the same in the alternative school setting as it would be in a non alternative school setting? Explain. (RQ 2)
13. Explain the factors that determine successful leadership in an alternative school setting vs. a non alternative school setting. (RQ 2, 4)
14. Did the district make a concerted effort to support you when you were hired to lead your school? Explain. (RQ 2, 3)

Appendix C: Consent to Participate

Consent to Participate**Research Title: Examining Self-perceptions of Leaders in Alternative School Settings****Researcher:** Jeremy C. Burrigh**Advisor:** Dr. Harold Frye

School of Education

Baker University

8001 College Blvd.

Overland Park, KS 66210

(913)-344-1220

Harold.frye@bakeru.edu

My name is Jeremy Burrigh and I am a doctoral student at Baker University in Kansas. I am conducting research on perceptions of school leaders in alternative school settings.

Participation in this study means that you will be asked to answer approximately 15-20 questions regarding your leadership experience in the alternative school setting. You may decline to answer any question at any time. Moreover, you may discontinue your participation at any time for any reason.

All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Interview transcripts will be password protected and only the research advisor and analyst will have access to the raw data.

Consent to Participate:

I understand that my participation in this research study is completely voluntary. I also understand that I am able to discontinue my participation within this study at any time for any reason. I understand that the principal investigator can be contacted at jeremycburrigh@stu.bakeru.edu should I have questions or wish to discontinue my participation.

I have read and understand the above statement. By signing, I agree to participate in the research study. The Baker University Institutional Review Board approved this study on June ?, 2016 and will expire on _____ unless renewal is obtained by the review board.

Participant Signature _____ **Date** _____

