A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGH ACHIEVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS


Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2014

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African American female principals typically lead low socioeconomic elementary schools. Administrators in predominately urban schools are familiar with the needs of minority students. Although Title I funds are provided from the national government via local educational agencies (LEAs), this money is normally not enough to keep up with technology integration and programs of more affluent schools. Therefore, African American female administrators rely on culture to develop meaningful relationships with students, teachers, and parents and makeup for any financial hardships, which may exist during the transformation of urban elementary schools. Limited research is available on academic success in urban schools. Over the years, much of the focus has been on failure of underperforming schools with minority students and leaders. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the leadership of African American female school leaders. Thus, it is important to study successful African American female role models in urban schools. The purpose of this study was to examine transformational leadership skills evident in African American female principals at high-achieving, urban elementary schools. What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American female principals who work in high-achieving urban elementary schools? It was assumed that African American female principals applied some or all of the skills of transformational leadership when leading in two different urban elementary school settings. Successful transformational leadership can be categorized under the following four components 1) charismatic leadership (or idealized influence, CL or II), 2) inspirational motivation (IM), 3) intellectual stimulation (IS), and 4) individualized consideration (IC) (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1997). Results showed that African
American female elementary school leaders displayed all tenets of the transformational leadership theory while leading high achieving campuses. However, the transformational leadership theory was missing a cultural component from its doctrine.
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LaBotta Taylor
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to give all honor and glory to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” –Matthew 17:20

To my grandparents, James and Geneva Taylor-

Thank you for your unconditional love. Miss you. Rest in Heaven!

To my family, friends, sorority sisters, church members, and co-workers-

Always believe in yourself!

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.” –Isaiah 54:17

To my dissertation committee and UNT colleagues-

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Jeanne Tunks, for your support and guidance. Also, I am appreciative to the rest of my committee: Dr. V. Barbara Bush (for your voice), Dr. Kelley King (for your historical perspective), and Dr. Jane Huffman (for your organizational techniques). Also, I extend gratitude to Dr. Linda Stromberg. I am extremely grateful to you all! God bless!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

*The heart of the matter is that requiring solid, challenging, interesting work on a par with what excellent public and private schools demand works, with poor kids and with all kids. What is good for the best is good for the rest. To do anything less is obscene.*

Dr. Lorraine Monroe, 1999

Background

The complexity of school reform, begun over 30 years ago, is more problematic among students, teachers, and leaders during the 21st century than in years past in urban schools (Horsford, 2011). Urban schools, which typically have larger enrollments than rural or suburban schools, primarily serve low-income students (Lomotey, 1987, 1993). Low-income students are generally defined as students at or below the national poverty level in an impoverished area (Ladson-Billings, 1995). A national survey on poverty found that poverty rates are higher for African Americans and Hispanics and well above the national average. According to the National Poverty Center (2013), “In 2010, 27.4 % of Blacks [African Americans] and 26.6 % of Hispanics were poor, compared to 9.9 % of non-Hispanic Whites and 12.1 % of Asians” (p. 1).

African American children who live in poverty are exposed to other external challenges within their own respective neighborhoods, such as malnutrition, family instability, high crime rates, prostitution, and drugs. Even with all of these challenges, research has shown that some African American students succeed academically. A pioneering study, entitled *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High Poverty Urban Elementary Schools* (Johnson & Asera, 1999), found that improvement efforts from these urban elementary schools came from building the capacity of principals to provide instructional leadership by employing the following strategies: (a) providing opportunities for principals to visit other successful schools with similar
demographics; (b) assisting principals in understanding and implementing data-driven, decision-making processes; (c) ensuring that principals have time to support instructional efforts on a daily basis; (d) giving principals easy access to district personnel when challenges arose; (e) giving principals time for individual professional development in best practices; and (f) mentoring principals on identification, support, and termination (if necessary) of inadequate staff. In addition to these strategies, the nine elementary schools interfaced with parents and communities in various ways that resulted in student academic success. According to this study, the key to success lies with strong educational leadership in the schools that uses strategies and processes for teaching, administration, professional development, and parent and community involvement.

Most principals in urban elementary schools teach for several years before going into administration (Tillman, 2006). In Texas, a minimum of two years of classroom experience is necessary in order to apply for principal certification (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2014). However, the attitudes of leaders begin in the classroom. Cooper and Sherk (1989) explain, “Teachers who believe urban children are mostly disadvantaged, unruly, unsocialized, slow, and backward will treat them that way, thus perpetuating a self-fulfilling prophecy” (p. 319). This assumption or stereotype has been around for years. The authors go on to note, “Teachers who expect students to be successful will work toward that end and usually, they will produce results that justify their optimism” (p. 316). Thus, successful leadership in urban schools follows good teaching, among teachers/turned leaders, who recognize that one size does not fit all.

Teachers turned administrators, steeped in the knowledge and practice that “all” children can learn, can apply the principles of transformational leadership to foster teachers’ instructional practices that improve learning for all children. The tenets of transformational leadership:
charismatic leadership or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, serve as guidelines for urban school administrators to support equitable teaching that subsequently leads to learning by all students. A transformational leader, such as a principal, is essential for success in impoverished areas and urban schools.

African American female principals typically lead low socioeconomic elementary schools (Alston & McClellan, 2011). Administrators in predominately urban schools are familiar with the needs of minority students (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). They are cognizant of the rigorous testing demands, as well as funding requirements for Title I schools. Title I schools are public schools with students from the highest percentage of low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Although Title I funds are provided from the national government via local educational agencies (LEAs), these funds are normally not enough to keep pace with technology integration and programs of more affluent schools. Therefore, African American female administrators rely on culture to develop meaningful relationships with students, teachers, and parents and make up for any financial hardships that may exist during the transformation of urban elementary schools (Siddle Walker, 2009).

Problem Statement

Limited research is available on academic success in urban schools. Over the years, much of the focus has been on failure of underperforming schools with minority students and leaders. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the leadership of African American female school leaders. Thus, it is important to study successful African American female role models in urban schools.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine transformational leadership skills evident in African American male principals at high-achieving, urban elementary schools.

Research Question

What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American female principals who work in high-achieving urban elementary schools?

Assumptions

It was assumed that African American male principals applied some or all of the skills of transformational leadership when leading in two different urban elementary school settings. This assumption was based on findings by scholars (Siddle Walker, 2009; Tillman, 2008; Horsford, 2011; Alston & McClellan, 2011) who examined leadership qualities of successful African American women in schools.

Conceptual Framework

As a conceptual model, transformational leadership theory centers on the notion that leaders set higher expectations for followers, which increases the scope for improving performance (Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership can be categorized under the following four tenets: 1) charismatic leadership (or idealized influence, CL or II), 2) inspirational motivation (IM), 3) intellectual stimulation (IS), and 4) individualized consideration (IC). In the first component, CL or II, followers attempt to identify and emulate the leaders. The definition for CL states:

Transformational leaders behave in ways that result in their being role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination. The leaders are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct. (p. 5)
In the second component, IM, leaders inspire and motivate individuals around them by assigning purposeful tasks. Specifically:

Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers’ work. Team spirit is aroused. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. Leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states; they create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and also demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared vision. (p. 5)

In the third category, IS, transformational leaders stimulate and inculcate innovation and creativity in followers by encouraging new approaches:

Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged. There is no public criticism of individual members’ mistakes. New ideas and creative problem solutions are solicited from followers, who are included in the process of addressing problems and finding solutions. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticized because they differ from the leaders’ ideas. (pp. 5-6)

In the final component, IC, leaders coach and mentor followers to their fullest potential,

Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential. Individualized consideration is practiced when new learning opportunities are created along with a supportive climate. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognized. The leader’s behavior demonstrates acceptance of individual differences (e.g., some employees receive more encouragement, some more autonomy, others firmer standards, and still others more task structure). A two-way exchange in communication is encouraged, and “management by walking around” work spaces is practiced. Interactions with followers are personalized (e.g., the leaders remembers previous conversations, is aware of individual concerns, and sees the individual as a whole person rather than as just an employee). The individually considerate leader listens effectively. The leader delegates tasks as a means of developing followers. Delegated tasks are monitored to see if the followers need additional direction or support and to assess progress; ideally, followers do not feel they are being checked on. (p. 6)

Bass (1998) points out that transformational leaders lead successful schools by creating a vision, setting goals, and fostering strong parental and community support. Yu, Leithwood, and
Jantzi (2002) observed how the principal sets the tone for the school, sustaining an innovative climate and organizational commitment for change. Others such as Fullan (2001), further endorsed the necessity of sophisticated leadership in a complex society, where transformational leaders emerge as team players, problem-solvers, and escalation analysts (known as CEOs in the corporate world)—all in one.

While transformational leaders can offer a liberating social and communicative vision for student communities, they are also perceived as potential change agents. In this perspective, they can demonstrate high moral ideals such as honesty and integrity, which leads one on the path to equality and social justice. Bennis (1989), for instance, described transformational leaders as noble, generous, and ethical, fostering a life of continual moral-psychological and cognitive growth for both the leader and the follower. Additionally, Jason (2000) observed that principals leading academic institutes are often successful because of their efforts towards student improvement through effective relationship building. Thus, transformational leadership, as a theoretical frame for this study served as a foundation on which to examine the principals’ leadership in two urban, elementary schools.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **African American**: An ethnicity referring to people having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).
- **Administrative Mentorship**: An opportunity for educational leaders to receive guidance and support from more experienced administrators.
- **Principal**: The leader of a school.
- **Recognition levels in Texas**: The accountability levels set by the State of Texas for standardized assessments were as follows: academically unacceptable, academically...
acceptable, recognized, and exemplary. Currently, the state of Texas is phasing in new accountability ratings (e.g., improvement required or met standard with distinction designations) during the transition from its former standardized assessment, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to its new test, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (TEA, 2012, 2014).

- Student achievement: The ability of students to master knowledge and skills in core subjects, such as reading, mathematics, science, and writing.

- Transformational leadership: Educational leaders who motivate their followers to achieve goals on an individual basis, as well as an organizational level (Bass, 1998; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1997).

Significance of the Study

It is important to study and note the factors that bring about success in urban public schools, particularly at the hand of African American female principals, a rarely studied group. Transformational leadership in African American female principals is not well researched because few transformational leadership studies include African American female participants. This study intends to add to the literature by providing new insight into the effectiveness of transformational leadership elements applied by African American women in academically successful urban settings.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the size of the population. A second limitation is the natural persona individuals exude when visitors or guests are in their presence. The first delimitation is that both participants are African American females, as was the researcher. Thus, this study is limited to the viewpoint of one particular race and gender. Finally, this study looks at leadership
in only high performing, elementary urban schools.

Organization of the Study

The study was designed as a multiple-case study that examined the evidence of Transformational Leadership Style tenets in two African American female principals, who led academically successful urban elementary schools. This study was developed over two months during which time the administrators were observed and interviewed, multiple documents (school meeting minutes, professional development minutes, data records) analyzed.

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the study which included the following: background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, assumptions, conceptual framework, definitions of key terms, significance of the study, limitations for the study, and summary. Chapter 2 presents the literature review. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology. Chapter 4 presents the findings. A discussion of the findings, personal reflection, conclusion, and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of transformational leadership is to “transform” people and organizations in a literal sense – to change them in mind and heart; enlarge vision, insight, and understanding; clarify purposes; make behavior congruent with beliefs, principles, or values; and bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating, and momentum building.

Dr. Stephen Covey, 2004

This chapter examines characteristics of high-performing schools, organizational culture, transformational leadership, leadership in urban education, African American female principals as community engagers, mentorship, pre-collegiate outreach programs, and college-going culture as they relate to the role played by African American female principals in leading academically successful schools in the United States. Despite the various discriminatory issues that African American female principals generally face in an urban setting, many have led academically successful programs in low-socioeconomic schools. Various studies suggest that certain factors attribute to academic success in urban elementary schools led by African American administrators. For these educational leaders, transformational leadership comes in the form of mentorship, partnership, and the establishment of an organizational culture, which promotes a college-going culture for all students.

Characteristics of High-Performing Schools

Reeves (2003), identifies key concepts and strategies used in educational reform efforts in the 90/90/90 schools. The 90/90/90 schools are schools which consist of more than 90% of minority students on free and reduced lunch with high academic achievement. The first 90 represents 90% or more students eligible for free and reduced lunch. The second 90 represents 90% or more students belong to an ethnic minority group. The last 90 symbolizes that 90% or
more students met state standards in reading or another core subject. The following five characteristics are common in all 90/90/90 schools:

- A focus on academic achievement
- Clear curriculum choices
- Frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement
- An emphasis on nonfiction writing
- Collaborative scoring of student work (p. 187).

First, the focus on academic achievement is clear. Second, curriculum choices reflect an emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematics for an overall balance of academics. Third, weekly assessments and teacher feedback provide multiple opportunities for improvement of student performance. Fourth, a single scoring rubric is employed as a measurement tool for informative writing. Finally, a collaborative scoring system between teachers, principal, and schools provide a framework for accountability.

An exemplary school in Norfolk, Virginia showed significant gains in academic success of its students. According to Reeves (2003), nine strategies were shared in this school’s academic success. First, the principals allow time for uninterrupted teacher collaboration. For example, typical announcements are typed and passed out rather than read at faculty meetings. This additional time allowed teachers to reflect on instruction and provide immediate and frequent feedback to students. This approach leaves a profound impact on student performance. Schedules are strategically structured to routinely provide more time to core subjects. Word walls play a critical role in effective action research and course corrections. Reassignments of teachers to different grade levels help principals retain teachers. Data analysis is used constructively and focused on current student scores. Common assessments provide consistency
among teacher expectations. Every employee from the hourly to exempt is respected and valued within the learning community. Finally, thematic lessons are integrated school-wide for a well-balanced curriculum. Fine arts teachers are able to play an instrumental part in collaborating with grade level teachers.

Such strategies and concepts were important for school improvement because they demonstrate high expectations for all students. All children, regardless of race or status, deserve the very best education. The main ingredient in student success appears to be consistency and collaboration by all stakeholders. Research-based strategies worked for students, teachers, and administrators of these high achieving 90/90/90 schools. Finally, academic performance in successful schools was highly prized.

Organizational Culture

An organizational culture exhibits learned behavior, emulated from one generation to the next (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Other elements include the norms, values, and beliefs shared among members of a group about goodness, righteousness, and importance. In addition, traditions, rituals, and stories provide meaningful bonding within the group. According to Bass and Avolio (1993), the organizational culture is the “glue” which provides a source of identity and distinctive competence for the organization as a whole. Even as members of the group change, the culture remains rooted by the actions of the leader.

Organizational culture and leadership intermingle. Leaders create and emphasize behaviors and norms within the culture (Bass, 1998). The norms develop as the leader stresses the importance of interaction in order to maintain the stability of the organization. According to Bass (1998) a solid organizational culture is a priority of effective school leaders.
School Leaders and Transformational Leadership

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) addressed recognition of successful school leadership. They stated that when you find an excellent school, you find an excellent administrator. Likewise, when you find a failing school, then you encounter weak leadership. Leaders play an essential role in the climate and culture of the school. Over the past few years, educational programs have shifted their focus from educational administration to educational leadership, whose functions include providing direction and exercising influence. It is not merely a role of administration, rather a function of leadership. This notion is essentially a position of transformational leadership.

The work of Bass and Avolio (1994) showed use of the transformational leadership style in organizations. This study demonstrated how the leader/follower relationships were linked to employee satisfaction. Their work showed that a targeted outcome of management was retaining good employees. In the study, the managers selected leaders based on extra efforts. Eventually, a reciprocal relationship between the leader and employee developed based on the supervisor’s initiation of shared leadership. Overall, a transformational leader had an effect on the developmental level of his or her team members.

Northouse (2001) noted:

Transformational leaders also act as change agents who initiate and implement new directions within organizations. They listen to opposing viewpoints within the organization as well as threats to the organization that may arise from outside the organization. Sometimes leaders generate instability themselves through nurturing the expression of discordant viewpoints or issues. Out of the uncertainty, transformational leaders create change. (p. 145)

Leithwood and Jantzi (1997) examined teachers’ perceptions of principals’ leadership. Data were collected from a sample size of 1,253 elementary and secondary teachers from an Ontario school district. This study was a replication of the researchers’ previous work. The
findings showed a correlation between teachers’ perception of transformational leadership and school leadership. Teachers viewed both operational management and instructional leadership as elements of transformational leadership. Results of this study were closely aligned to the authors’ first study. Regarding gender, women leaders were rated higher than male counterparts. There were also more female teachers and female principals elementary settings. These women were often younger than male leaders. “Leaders who are perceived to engage in effective staffing practices, provide instructional support, visibly monitor school activities, and maintain a community focus are also perceived to be transformational” (p. 330).

Later research by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999, 2000) surveyed a sample of 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students in a large Canadian school district and studied the effects of transformational leadership on student engagement and organizational conditions in schools. According to the authors, school reform efforts rely on both individuals and the organization as a whole. In addition, organizational dependency rests on individuals with extreme motivational and commitment attributes. When schools members share vision and goals, the collaboration creates a culture of trust and unity. Thus, alleviating some frustration experienced with implementing new ideas and restructuring initiatives. Their findings suggested that transformational leadership approaches contribute to the development of capacity and commitment. Results indicated that principal leadership had a greater effect on students than teacher leadership. Findings also revealed the importance of leaders partnering with parents to educate children. Further research is necessary where family educational cultures appear dysfunctional. Their recommendations invited opportunities for how socio-psychological effects enhance organizational outcomes.

A study by Leithwood and Riehl (2003) led to the following five claims in reference to school leadership:
1. Leadership has significant effect on student learning, second only to the effects of the quality of curriculum and teachers’ instruction.

2. Currently, administrators and teacher leaders provide most of the leadership in school, but other potential sources of leadership exist.

3. A core set of leadership practices from the “basics” of successful leadership and are valuable in almost all educational contexts.

4. Successful school leaders respond productively to challenges and opportunities created by the accountability-oriented policy context in which they work.

5. Successful school leaders respond productively to the opportunities and challenges of educating diverse groups of students. (pp. 2-6)

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), transformational leadership contributes to organizational effectiveness within school districts. They stated that the following components contribute to effective schools: (a) building vision and goals; (b) providing intellectual stimulation; (c) offering individualized support; (d) symbolizing professional practices and values; (e) demonstrating high performance expectations; (f) developing structure to foster participation in decisions. Transformational leaders excel when they maintain a sense of urgency and overcome the external factors to keep the districts functioning and performing on high levels.

Transformational Leadership in Urban Education

The theoretical framework on transformational leadership highlights the roles played by principals in shaping and cultivating a transformative academic environment in both rural and urban schools. While several scholars corroborate the pivotal position administrators play (Kose, 2011; Portin, 2000; Osterman, Crow, & Rosen, 1997), others added to the social dimension
emphasizing that productive urban schools are a direct result of supportive, female principals who encourage creative instruction (Pavan & Reid, 1994; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Lomotey, 1987; Mertz & McNeeley, 1994). For female principals to emerge as potential agents of change, Scheurich (1998) suggested the need to develop seven organizational culture characteristics and use them on a consistent basis.

These seven organizational culture characteristics include 1) a strong shared vision; 2) loving and caring environments for children and adults; 3) strong collaborative “We Are Family” approach throughout the school; 4) innovative, experimental, openness to new ideas; 5) hardworking school staff, but not to the point of burn out; 6) appropriate conduct for all members built into the organizational culture; and 7) school staff as a whole holds themselves accountable for the success of all. These factors, however, are now harder to obtain unless principals develop a strong relationship between the school and the urban community (Siddle Walker, 1993; Case, 1997; Jeynes, 2005; Loder, 2005b; Reitzug, 1989; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). To achieve this end, several scholars stress the need to build trusting teacher relationships (Cosner, 2011; Jones, 2002; Onafowora, 2005; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, 2007); embrace a cultural leadership style to address the diverse needs of learners (Tillman, 2008); and continue a tenacious commitment to social justice (Theoharis, 2008; Alston & McClellan, 2011).

Osterman, Crow, and Rosen (1997) examined the role conceptions of newly appointed urban principals within the context of their schools and districts as a means of identifying personal and organizational forces that influence the emergence of transformational leadership. An exploratory survey consisting of 38 open-ended and closed questions was distributed to principals approximately 4 to 5 months upon entering their new positions. The following research questions were posed to the 216 new principals: 1) What strategic priorities did they
establish, and what did they view as the main obstacles and supports influencing their efforts to be successful? 2) Identify those groups of individuals who most influenced the way they perform their jobs. Describe what a principal needs to do to be perceived as effective by these groups? 3) According to our own standards, what does a principal need to do to be effective? Overall, only 158 (73%) principals out of the 216 completed and returned the survey. The results indicated that women’s administrative experience was more likely to be at the elementary level, whereas men more frequently reported experience at both elementary and secondary levels. The survey responses clearly showed that principals recognized the influential role that teachers and parents played and the need to develop positive working relationships with them. The recommendations warranted future research in the area of district support regarding the relationship between principals and district superintendents and the nature of superintendent expectations.

Young and McLeod (2001) examined women in educational administration and their aspirations and decisions upon entering the field. A total of 241 records were examined of all students enrolled in the state of Iowa’s educational administration program, of which, 127 records were that of female participants. A purposive sampling technique included 20 female administrators and educational administration students. Specifically, the researcher interviewed participants on the number of years the individual had practiced as an educator; whether a student held a master’s degree before enrolling in the administration program and, if so, in what area; grade levels and subject matter in which the individual had taught; endorsement area(s) sought; time taken to complete the degree programs; degree(s) sought; whether the individual had previous administrative experience; and the content of the student’s statement of purpose. The findings suggested that the career aspirations of women who ultimately entered the field of educational administration were intricately related to their career commitments, positional goals,
and leadership orientations. Furthermore, more research is necessary on administrative role models, exposure to transformational leadership styles, and endorsements and/or support affected women’s entrance into administration.

To help facilitate the career path, Polite, McClure, & Rollie (1997) recommended that professional development for the emerging urban principal be offered on a consistent basis. This study reported on the process and outcomes of shadowing encounters of urban middle school principals. The participants included more than 58 middle school principals nationwide. The following overarching questions to the principals guided the study: a) What do I tend to do with my time daily? b) What do my collective work behaviors mean with respect to instructional leadership for my school? The researcher gathered data from a full-day shadowing experience, two in-depth reflective conversations, and a final follow-up in-depth interview. The shadowing experience included daily behaviors across five evolving elements, which included promoting students’ cognitive development, administration management, promoting students’ affective development, student discipline matters, and self development and mentoring. This experience detailed the administrative and instructional leadership behaviors of the principal. The findings fell into four “impact categories”: a) administrative practice, b) personal experience, c) long-term practice, and d) the role of “shadow.” The recommendations were to include professional development opportunities, which will bridge the gap between the principals’ formal preparation and the duties and activities of their daily jobs.

African American Female Principals as Community Engagers

This section covers literature that relates to specific aspects of the African American culture as related to schooling and African American leadership in schools. Although this is not specifically addressed in the transformational leadership tenets, this section bears consideration
due to the nature of the African American culture that creates leaders through community engagement. Hence, African American female principals have historically sought community engagement in the African American community to support success in schools.

Prior to a landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, students of color were legally separated from white students in public schools. When communities were segregated, early African American principals relied on a strong relationship between the student’s home and school environment (Siddle Walker, 2009; Horsford, 2011). There is a lack of research on African American female principals, who exemplify role models of school-community relations. In this chapter, community refers to relationships within the spaces residents occupy. Community members may serve the area and/or perimeter of the community. The area typically includes the school attendance zone, which contains residences, businesses, and churches. To date, this is known as community involvement (Tillman, 2004).

Community involvement is an essential part of school leadership, especially in urban areas. Current research reveals that school leaders playing an active role in community-oriented goals for the advancement of their neighborhoods (Siddle Walker, 2005). Ultimately, this involvement improves the lives of minority students. In essence, leadership has a vital role to play in the development of the whole child, which is necessary for continued academic success. As Ladson-Billings (1994) suggests, an active community member can become a better student.

Diamond and Gomez (2004) found that middle-class African Americans have the ability to tailor a quality education for their children when compared to working-class, urban African Americans. Therefore, in addition to understanding the demographics of the neighborhood they serve, urban principals work to establish trust in order to advance relationships with parents. Moving beyond the confines of the school walls, urban school leaders are more likely to
understand the cultural and social conditions of their communities. Once this thinking pattern is established, the principal emerges as an advocate within their respective neighborhoods.

In the post-*Brown* era, African American female principals identify with the community in an adapted role. According to Loder (2005a), “Recent work on African American women principals suggests that motherhood and its associated values of nurturing, caretaking, and helping develop children are salient to how they understand and interpret their roles (p. 304). This was the case with a principal in a qualitative study by Case (1997) who examined the concept of “othermothering” in two Connecticut, urban elementary schools. The two participants were a young, African American elementary school principal and an African American fifth-grade, elementary school teacher with 25 years of experience in the urban classroom. The principal carried a strong reputation for nurturing and maternal identification. The themes of the study relate to perceptions of mothers, paternal and maternal grandmothers, stories related to leadership, community and parental involvement, urban children, and maternal thinking (Ruddick, 1989). Consistent with the leadership roles of African American female principals, the “othermothering” or interpersonal caring trait shapes the natural identity of the African American culture. Ruddick held that in order for urban elementary schools to be successful, the African American female principal should place a strong emphasis on the psycho-educational needs of the child.

Research on African American women in leadership differs from that of their White counterparts. African American female principals place higher priority on community involvement in an urban educational setting (Monteiro, 1977). Lomotey (1989) stated how the “emphasis on the larger community may be a key ingredient in bringing about improved academic performance for African American students” (p. 5). In addition to curriculum
planning, teacher evaluation, and student achievement, community involvement becomes a
dynamic in instructional management for African American female leaders.

At the same time, Rosener (1990) argued that men and women lead differently as well.
Male counterparts are less democratic than women. Eagly and Johnson (1990) asserted,
“Women evidently proceed with more collaboration and sharing of decision-making” (p. 236).
However, Bass (1998) noted a more likely chance for women to succeed in a male dominated
field if she exhibits certain masculine virtues, such as ambition, competiveness, and task
orientation.

Mentorship

African American female leaders benefit from effective mentorship. Mentorship bridges
the gap in urban settings that typically lack systems of support. It provides the means for women
of color to gain entry and access into educational administration. A survey conducted by The
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1977), indicated that African American women
acquire fewer administration jobs, signaling a need for mentorship. According to Enomoto,
Gardiner, and Grogan, (2000), prospective mentors and women of color who seek to be
educational leaders attend to the following: (a) gaining political savvy; (b) assessing networks;
(c) finding mentors who are similar to their protégés; (d) seeking mentors who were different
from their protégés; (e) having more than one mentor; and (f) securing alternative support
systems. Mentorship, whether sought personally or assigned professionally, is essential for
administrators to adequately prepare for the challenging roles in today’s schools. More than a
decade ago research showed a lack of principal preparation in the urban educational field
(Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000). Unfortunately, this statement holds true today (Alston &
McClennan, 2011).
Mentorship preparation is a vital component for aspiring African American female leaders (Enomoto et al., 2000; Helfeldt, Capraro, Foster, & Carter, 2009; Cistone & Stevenson, 2000, Allen, Jacobsen, & Lomotey, 1995) and potential teachers (Tillman, 2003, 2006; Sorrells, Schaller, & Yang, 2000). Thus, aspiring African American principals seek mentors early in their teaching careers. Tillman (2003) examined a mentoring triad that included a first-year African American teacher, her mentor, and her principal. The researcher investigated journaling as a reciprocal process of communication within the urban school setting. The setting was based in a large urban high school with a predominantly African American student population. The study focused on two central themes: the teacher’s professional competence and the teacher as a member of the school community. Overall, 23 publications were identified from reports and speeches. For the purposes of this study, only 18 meet the criteria for the specified framework.

The results suggested that the first year teacher become more involved in school activities, since students tended to gravitate toward “teacher leaders.” Reflective journaling was a strategy used for principals to assist first year teachers. The journals provided a way to communicate their thoughts and feelings and work through some of the frustrations experienced as a novice teacher. Findings also suggested that first year teachers have exemplary mentors to develop as effective teachers. It was extremely important that these mentors had experience in urban settings and showed commitment to their mentees. The recommendations warranted future commitment of administrators to carefully place first year teachers with best possible mentoring arrangement available on their respective campuses.

In 2006, Tillman examined the relationship between leadership practices and teacher mentoring in urban schools. It was conducted in a large, urban high school in the South with a 98% African American student population and more than 70% eligible for free and reduced
lunch district-wide. The participants were a first year African American teacher and her principal. Tillman referred to her prior research in 2004 on minority women “each, with her own color, history, and movement, is confronting an archaic institutional paradigm of inequity, linear and elite governance, and devaluation of emotion and relationships” (p. 283). The 2006 case study was focused on three themes: 1) mentoring as a means for enhancing professional and personal competence; 2) mentoring as a means of transmitting the culture of the educational environment; and 3) mentoring as a catalyst for transformative leadership. The research design used surveys and questionnaires. Data were collected using a combination of reflective journaling and individual and group interviews. The results suggested implications for transformative leadership practices through the facilitation and arrangements of effective mentoring. The recommendations warranted future research in the area of school leadership preparation.

Ultimately, an effective urban school is best supported through a transformational process, breaking traditional barriers (loosening and tightening the coupling), providing time, emphasizing reflection, negotiating the trade-offs, and maintaining a data-driven project (Pink & Wallace, 1984). This qualitative study, conducted in Kansas City Public Schools, examined how to create effective urban schools. The following research questions guided the study: 1) What specific practices within the range of components identified by the effective schools’ literature can be supported by data as being effective? 2) What skills and knowledge do administrators and teachers need to successfully execute these practices? 3) How can this knowledge and skill be developed so that they become institutionalized into the fabric of the schools? Findings revealed the following nine lessons: effectiveness of interventions were reduced when schools were asked to do too much; schedule adjustments allowed for practices of teacher innovation;
central administrative interest and support; opportunities provided for more teamwork and collegiality; monitoring during implementation of new programs; accountability for those assigned to help schools improve; provided sequenced staff development on effective strategies for urban elementary students; widespread participation on campus; teachers and administrators meet regularly.

Principals of color benefit from district support and ongoing expertise from organizations, and a coherent preparation program that infuses equity, diversity, and social justice within all course offerings and internship experiences (Kose, 2009). In addition to traditional college prep programs, researchers have shown the importance of developing innovative academies for urban school leaders (Leak, Petersen, & Patzkowsky, 1997). This qualitative study examined the development of an innovative academy for urban school leaders in the Baltimore area. The research focused on five leadership domains and the school leader’s ability to: a) assure the interrelatedness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; b) assure that student developmental needs, learning styles, interests, and multiple intelligences are addresses as curriculum, instruction, and assessment are developed and adapted; c) utilize a set of guidelines, processes, and procedures for the delivery and adaptation of curriculum; d) ensure that appropriate instructional resources are provided and utilized to support effective instructional methods and practices; and e) create a school culture, environment, and climate in which curriculum, instruction, and assessment will maximize student learning outcomes (Baltimore City Public Schools, 1996). The researcher used in-depth interviews, observations, and formal assessment data. The findings showed a need for urban principals to have access to expertise, trainers, training materials, and training facilities. The recommendations were to continue future development of this academy with community partnerships.
Student Mentorship

Transformational principals not only receive protégés, but also recognize the significance of assigning mentors to minority students. Transformational leaders set an environment of mentorship for their students in high-achieving schools. Mentoring sets a solid foundation for creating a successful school in urban areas. Historically, first generation students and underrepresented students rely profoundly on teachers, counselors, and administrators to guide their educational endeavors (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York, 1966). The investigation by Herrera, Vang, and Gale (2002) yielded positive results of three mentoring programs for secondary students. Two-thirds of the grades of the students serviced by an at-risk, middle school program proved mentoring to be a contributing factor to academic success. A study conducted by Radcliff and Bos (2011) expanded the concept of mentoring to developing high self-efficacy in high school students. According to Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992), motivation, self-belief, and achievement emerge through a caring, goal directed relationship. Research also shows that student mentorship programs are more likely to be successful if they:

- Are well planned and structured to provide high levels of interaction between students and their mentors.
- Are driven by the needs and interest of students.
- Are based on clear goals and objectives derived from careful assessment of needs and resources.
- Include structured activities as well as significant opportunity for informal interaction.
- Provide support and training for mentors.
- Provide occasional opportunity for group activities involving students and their
mentors.

- Include an evaluation component designed to engage all involved in a process of continuous improvement. (Radcliff & Boss, 2011)

Often, these caring, goal-directed relationships via successful mentoring are facilitated by transformational principals.

Pre-Collegiate Outreach Programs

A transformational principal knows the importance of training students (student development), building self-esteem, and instilling confidence through community resources, especially in urban schools where kids continue to fall through the cracks. Pre-collegiate outreach programs can be key in establishing a transformational environment. These programs aim to close the achievement gap due to internal and external factors, such as poorly trained teachers, lack of rigorous curriculum, and lack of role models (Achieve, 2010; Gullatt & Jan, 2003). They function in a dual capacity by also providing the social capital necessary for students to achieve college enrollment (Perna, 2002). Social capital is developed by pre-collegiate outreach programs offering a plethora of interventions for academic preparation, while fostering attitudes and beliefs about the advantages of going to college (Gullatt & Jan, 2003).

Facilitation of such programs is attributed directly to the arrival of Upward Bound, which grew from the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Fields, 2001). Over a decade ago, the federal government started awarding GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grants to schools and colleges (Fields, 2001). According to Fields (2001), more than 1,000 colleges and universities offer the Upward Bound program to high school students and at least 30 states were the recipients of the GEAR UP grants in 1999.

Upward Bound is the first of eight federally, funded programs –known collectively as
TRIO- to assist first generation, low-income students (TRIO programs, 2012). It provides high school students with rigorous instruction in reading, mathematics, and science in preparation for higher education. Currently, Upward Bound is comprised of approximately 775 programs and conducted mainly on college campuses (TRIO programs, 2012). The end result for many students is facilitated through undergraduate programs, such as the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement, as a college retention service and pre-graduate study.

GEAR UP, which launched in 1999, cultivates a partnership among low-performing, high-poverty middle schools, businesses, community based agencies, and colleges and provides exposure for all children to a pre-college curriculum (Perna, 2002). GEAR UP works closely with teachers, counselors and administrators, by providing professional development opportunities in effort to ensure that students are enrolled in college preparatory courses, receive additional academic support, and have access to available resources in their respective school and communities at the secondary level (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). It balances both sides of the spectrum by providing academic interventions and disseminating college information (TRIO programs, 2012).

College-going Culture

Investigation shows that successful Title I schools in high poverty areas are led by transformational leaders, who employ a college-going culture. College-going culture is becoming a major theme in educational research, and many researchers have begun to concentrate on the improvement of student achievement in the K-12 setting as a measurement of success (e.g., Alexander & Eckland, 1977; Perna, 2000). It is a critical component in the development of underserved students in low socioeconomic areas. According to the College Board (2006) website, a college-going culture “builds the expectation of postsecondary
education for all students—not just the best students. It inspires the best in every student, and it supports students in achieving their goals” (p. 2). A college-going culture as discussed by MacDonald and Dorr (2006) exists in schools where:

- Students are expected to achieve high academic standards in a college preparatory curriculum
- The school staff is collectively committed to students’ college goals
- College is a visual reality
- Informal and formal communication networks promote and support college expectations (p. 3)

In this day and time, an alternative conception to traditional ways of educational practices is offered as we continue under the auspices of college readiness. The concept of college-going culture involves more than the inherent ability to read and write on grade level. It is here where the transference of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and beliefs in a transformational learning environment are identified to support the changing culture and need for dramatic improvements in educational reform (Spector, 2006). According to the Pathways to College Network (2004), a national organization with a commitment to creating a college-going culture, schools with mission statements focused on college preparedness should do the following:

- Expect that all underserved students are capable of being prepared to enroll and succeed in college
- Provide a range of high-quality, college-preparatory tools for students and families
- Embrace social, cultural, and varied learning styles when developing the environment and activities at the school
- Involve leaders at all levels in establishing policies, programs, and practices
• Maintain sufficient financial and human resources for this mission

• Assess policy, programs, and practices regularly to determine their effectiveness

(p. 2)

Statistics show that students from higher income families are 25% more likely to enter college than students from low-income families. In addition, 49 states and the District of Columbia have adopted college and career readiness standards. Texas, along with two other states, is included in that number (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

The growing need for a cadre of diverse learners to acquire technological knowledge and skills in the 21st century is relevant today. Learners, especially ones from underrepresented populations, must fully immerse themselves in emerging educational phenomenon. Advocates including major figures like McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez (2002) of the college-going culture theory, a new, progressive educational phenomenon, must engage learners while integrating college readiness standards into academic curricula (Govan, 2011). According to McClafferty et al. (2002), the college-going culture theory is predicated on the following nine principles: college talk, clear expectations, information and resources, comprehensive counseling model, testing and curriculum, faculty involvement, family involvement, college partnerships, and articulation.

McClafferty et al. posit that college talk influences college aspirations and informs students of expectations once they enroll into a higher educational institution. Without this vital communication piece, the learning community might not be as privy to information in regards to college. Clear expectations suggest that campuses with a college-going culture must clearly communicate to key stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, students, and parents/guardians) the expectations of maintaining an established culture and academic success for all children. The
facilitation of these efforts allows each participant to know their role in the ultimate goal of students’ subsequent matriculation at two or four-year institutions of higher education. In a study conducted by Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999), parental support was determined to be the most significant predictor of encouraging students’ college aspirations. This principle emphasizes the role in which school faculty help in shaping a college-going culture on campus. In an effort to support students’ college preparation, the faculty works with parents on this level.

A component of a college-going culture, family involvement, calls for full parental engagement at their children’s schools (McDonough, 2006). According to McClafferty et al. (2002), parental involvement is viewed as a partnership and strengthens the students’ support system. Parental involvement is a critical component to addresses the struggle of urban students. However, most teachers and administrators tend to struggle with creating effective partnership with poor, urban parents/guardians. By forging meaningful, parental relationships, many schools can overcome cultural and linguistic differences while encouraging students to pursue postsecondary education (Conley, 2008). Family night in schools has become a popular trend over the past decade. Schools promote parental involvement by offering a family math night, family reading night, and/or a family science night. These events not only allow the children to showcase their learning, but also provide an opportunity for parents to gain more information in regards to their child’s education.

College partnerships were formed to increase student awareness to college life (McClafferty et al., 2002). Some partnerships include Upward Bound and AVID for example. These programs help inspire college aspirations, build contextual knowledge and skills, and adapt academic behaviors for college preparedness (Conley, 2008). In this regard, it is important for principals to implement such programs in high achieving schools.
Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on: characteristics of high-performing schools and organizational culture, the importance of school leaders and transformational leadership, African American female principal with respect to transformational leadership, the significance of effective mentors for African American female administrators, and concluded with prior and current research on establishing a college-going culture in urban settings.

Five characteristics of high-performing schools included a focus on academic achievement, clear curriculum choices, frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement, an emphasis of nonfiction writing, and collaborative scoring of student work (Reeves, 2003). Successful schools maintained an organizational culture instilled by the leader. According to Bass and Avolio (1993), the organizational culture was the “glue” which provides a source of identity and distinctive competence for the organization as a whole. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) posited, transformational leadership contributed to organizational effectiveness within school districts. Bass (1998) noted a more likely chance for women to succeed in a male dominated field if she exhibited certain masculine virtues, such as ambition, competiveness, and task orientation. A transformational principal knows the importance of training students (student development), building self-esteem, and instilling confidence through community resources, especially in urban schools where kids continue to fall through the cracks.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine transformational leadership skills evident in African American female principals at high-achieving, urban elementary schools. This study observed two urban school districts in the State of Texas and responded to the following research question:

What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American female principals who work at high-achieving, urban elementary schools?

This study assumed that both African American female principals applied some or all of the elements of transformational leadership in order to sustain academic success in two different urban school settings.

Research Design

This study was a multiple case study. Woodside and Wilson (2003) defined case method as an appropriate method to explain, describe, control, or predict processes in association with different phenomena at various levels – individually or organizationally. This method was critical in providing an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of more complex issues, such as poverty and crime. Issue questions or issue statements provide the researcher with a powerful conceptual structure when organizing a case study. Since case study research does not depend on a priori knowledge, meaningful background information from the participants, in an authentic setting provides rich data that more deeply probe the situation, leading to valuable learning about the phenomenon under study.

Multiple-case study methodology connects perspectives and theories, in which the researcher sets out to examine the similarities and differences across multiple cases. Yin (2003) described how a multiple case study can be used to either, “(a) predict[s] similar results (a literal
replication) or (b) predict[s] contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p. 47). Educational researchers have become more dependent upon case study research for qualitative studies. Case study is one method, which provides a detailed account of situations in social science inquiry (Stake, 1994). According to Gagnon (2010), case research provides many advantages as it provides an authentic representation of reality, thus, giving it adaptability for both the researcher and the context. Unlike certain quantitative results, the order that variables are input into a model does not affect qualitative results.

In guiding the design of case studies, the reliance on theoretical concepts is necessary. Exploratory case study has contributed to the popularity of case study research (Gagnon, 2010). Exploratory case study is “aimed at defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures” (Yin, 2003, p. 5). Moreover, exploratory case study allows the researcher an opportunity to observe the raw state of social phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher is given the opportunity to gather research from a hands-on perspective in the field. Prior to the research questions and the hypotheses, the researcher conducts fieldwork and data collection. The researcher goes into the field to conduct in-depth interviews, facilitate focus groups, observations, job shadowing, and gathers both informal and formal records, such as memos and school documents.

Settings and Participants

The settings were two urban elementary schools in two North Texas school districts. The sample for this case study consisted of two African American female principals. According to state accountability standards, the sample included principals who led recognized or exemplary campuses. An exemplary rating was the highest rank a school achieved in the following core subject areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and science. In order to accomplish this goal, at
least 90% of all students—including each subgroup of African American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged—must pass the core subject areas. The recognized rating was the second highest rank, in which 75% of all students—including subgroups—must pass the core subjects.

Case 1

Setting. School district A had approximately 8,150 students. Its student demographics included 64% African American, 23% Hispanic, 8% White, 1% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 3% other. The district served both a 64% economically disadvantaged and 44% at-risk population. School A had approximately 600 students in pre-K to 4th grade. Student demographics included 76% African Americans, 17% Hispanics, 4% White, and 3% other in the North Texas area. The staff consisted of 30 professional educators and 10 support staff members, of which, 56% were African American, 34% White, and 10% other. The staff was 95% female.

Principal profile. Participant 1 had 16 years of educational experience. During this time, she had been a third grade teacher, a reading specialist, teacher of the year, and teacher coordinator. She had 5 years of principal experience. Four years at her current campus and one year in another district. P1 earned a bachelors of science in economics and a masters of arts in educational leadership. She was in her late thirties with four children. P1 was currently employed as principal of a PK-4 elementary campus.

Case 2

Setting. School district B had approximately 8,900 students. Its student demographics were 78% African American, 16% Hispanic, 4% White, and 2% other. The district served both a 69% economically disadvantaged and 37% at-risk population. School B had approximately 615 students in pre-K to 5th grade. Demographics included 87% African Americans, 8% Hispanics,
4% White, and 1% other in the North Texas area. The staff consisted of 41 professional educators and 11 support staff members, of which, 61% are African American, 31% were White, and 8% were classified as other. It was 90% female.

Principal profile. Participant 2 had 15 years of experience working in education. During this time, she had been a science teacher, assistant principal, and associate principal at the high school level. She had been a principal for 3 years. All of these years had been at the same campus and in the same district. P2 earned a bachelors of science in chemistry and a masters of education in teaching with principal certification. She was in her late thirties and married with two children. P2 was currently employed as principal of a PK-5 elementary campus.

Data Sources

The data sources included observations, documents, and interviews. Each of the sources is explained in more details below.

Observations

Observations included: the principal’s interactions with district personnel, teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members on a daily basis. The researcher shadowed the principal as she performed her job and made decisions for her elementary campus. These observations included school activities and meetings both on campus and off campus. In non-participant, or direct, observation, the investigator observed informal evidence in a spontaneous way. The observations were documented on the principal observation protocol (see Appendix B). This form assisted in recording transformational leadership practices of each principal. In addition, it helped to reflect on these practices and draw valid conclusions.

Documents

Documents included announcements, flyers, agendas, and minutes for school wide
events, such as family math night, family reading night, parent breakfast, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Artifacts also reflected district meetings, such as principal meetings, vertical team meetings, and professional development. The minutes were acceptable either from the planning meetings before the activity or follow up meeting after the event. Additionally, staff memos included policies and procedures written by the principal to teachers, staff, parents, or the community. These memos normally highlighted norms and expectations for upcoming school events.

Interviews

There were three interviews with each principal during which I employed the Seidman approach. This approach allowed for in-depth interviewing and interaction between the researcher and the participants. Seidman’s (2006) three-interview series provided an authentic view of “the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). The three-interview series included three separate interviews within a three-week time frame. Seidman recommends that each interview last for a minimum of 90 minutes. He stated that “the purpose of this approach is to have the participants reconstruct their experience, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning, anything shorter than 90 minutes for each interview seems too short” (p. 20). Interview 1 focused on the principal’s life history, Interview 2 concentrated on the details of the experience, and Interview 3 reflected on the meaning of the administrative experience. This structure acknowledged the importance of reflection and storytelling made the experience one of validity for the participants. The specific interview protocol is found in Appendix A.
Data Collection Procedures

Observations

Observations were routinely done in accordance with the principal’s calendar and/or school events. Data were collected in the following manner. Observations were collected by following the principal around and recording daily interactions on campus. If the opportunity allowed, I made a verbal note in the Evernote app on her personal IPhone. However, if more valuable, and the use of technology appeared to be of an intrusive nature at the time, then notes were taken by hand and/or reflections were done later. Observations were also recorded on the principal observation protocol form, as well as in a field notes journal. These observations noted physical, as well as verbal interactions. Physical interactions included body language and gestures, such as eye contact and head nodding. Verbal interactions included directives and conversations with the community at large (i.e. teachers, parents). All notes were uploaded into ATLAS.ti.

Documents

Documents were collected and organized by topic and date for one month. The documents collected included announcements, flyers, agendas, and minutes from the campus, district, and local community. Staff memos were also collected via email or hard copy format from either the principal or principal’s secretary. All emails received were saved on a flashdrive and then printed on paper. The staff memos from the principal served as a direct reflection of the principal’s leadership style. They were collected and organized in a 3 ring binder by date. All documents were copied and placed in a 3 ring binder. The binder was divided into 5 sections. The five sections were labeled School Events, Community Events, Principal Meetings, Campus Meetings, and Professional Development. All documents obtained were uploaded into
ATLAS.ti. All memos were uploaded into ATLAS.ti.

Interviews

Three interviews with each principal were scheduled in advance. The interviews were completed within Seidman’s (2006) recommended three-week window. Appendix A contains a list of questions modeled for the interviews. The 90-minute interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed in Microsoft Word. Interviews were conducted in the principal’s office or conference room. All transcriptions were uploaded into ATLAS.ti.

Data Analysis

ATLAS.ti 7.1™ (2013) was used as the primary analytical tool. This computer-assisted software program provides an electronic method to code, organize, and analyze qualitative data. An analytical approach, employing the tenets of the Transformational Leadership Theory as the points of analysis, provided the basis for analysis. The four tenets of the TLT served as categories for coding all data sources in the ATLAS.ti system. Each primary document served as a source for data coding.

All data—observations, documents, and interviews—were placed into the hermeneutic unit (HU), a term used by ATLAS.ti. A hermeneutic unit holds documents similar to computer files. The HU file was named African American FP for this project and served as a digital display for all project data. After the HU was created, the data sources: interview transcriptions, observation data, and memos about the artifacts were uploaded. Within the qualitative software program, each data source was known as a primary document (PD). The primary documents were labeled as two primary document families—one representing each of the two principals.

The initial analysis began with assigning the transformational leadership theory tenets within the coding manager function in ATLAS.ti. These four color codes represented the
following four tenets of transformational leadership: charismatic leadership (CL), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC), which served as analytical points for coding of the data. Tenets were labeled accordingly: CL represented respect, trust, and admiration; IM displayed motivation and inspiration; IS portrayed innovation and creativity; and IS demonstrated positions of coach, mentor, and/or role model. In addition, the entire definition of each tenet described thoroughly in chapter 1 was used as the criteria for labeling data. During data analysis, I considered the keywords included within the tenets of the transformational leadership theory. Further examination included principal interaction with teachers, students, staff, and community members. This included how each principal communicated verbally with others during my observations and interviews. For instance, was the communication positive or negative? Also, written communication was utilized to help ascertain if the principal was inspirational and motivational. I looked for themes that emerged from the data. These themes were derived from patterns that reoccurred in all of the observations, documents, and interviews. They showed consistently throughout the analysis. Quotations from the interview transcriptions, meeting minutes, and observation protocol were read, then color coded into one of the four color coded areas related to the four tenets. This included direct quotes on what the principal felt was the key in leading a high achieving elementary school in an urban area. When the original color code was examined, all data that were highlighted and related would appear under that code. This information served as the evidence that supported the transformational leadership theory tenets. These findings were reviewed for alignment within and between principals. Furthermore, quotations, codes, and memos were not part of the HU, yet included as transparent layers stored within the HU. Data in the transparent layers were examined for alignment or misalignment to the tenets of
Transformational leadership and examined for alternate perspectives when alignment did not seem evident.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine transformational leadership skills evident in African American female principals at high-achieving, urban elementary schools. The question posed: What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American female principals who work at high-achieving, urban elementary schools? To answer this question, I used observations, documents, and interviews over a two-month time period. Using Seidman’s (2006) interview protocol, I determined the transformational leadership factors the principal used to guide academic achievement on her campus. Data provided by these methods provided academia with a better understanding of how to serve elementary campuses in urban areas.

This research study was significant, as it added to the limited amount of research on African American female administrators in high achieving schools. Furthermore, it provided insight into the educational phenomenon of transformational leadership and education. Such practices into principal leadership in urban areas enhanced the administrative experience and contributed to the preparation of future campus leaders.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This chapter discusses a multiple case study to determine which, if any, transformational leadership factors of two African American female principals were apparent as they led high-achieving, urban elementary schools. Transformational leadership guided these dynamic leaders in low socioeconomic areas. The four tenets of transformational leadership discussed here are idealized influence (II) or charismatic leadership (CL), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC). Of these precepts, inspirational motivation (IM) and individualized consideration (IC) were the most influential components in an urban setting.

This chapter provides the results of the following research question:
What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American female principals who work at high-achieving, urban elementary schools?

The results are presented in the following order: Principal 1 across all four TL tenets, Principal 2 across all four TL tenets, comparison of the two cases, and analysis of similarities and differences between the two cases. All analyses revealed the role of the two principals as transformational leaders and determined the influential factors that led to their success as pioneering educationists in urban areas.

Principal 1
Charismatic leadership (CL)

As the first tenet of the transformational leadership theory, charismatic leadership (CL) was defined as: “Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence, and determination. The leaders are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They can be counted
on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct” (Bass, 1998, p. 5).

Observations. During observations of Principal 1, teachers, staff, parents, and students showed admiration, respect, and trust for her. This was noted during award assemblies. I heard parents say “I like her,” “The principal genuinely cares.” They appeared to really admire the principal. When P1 asked questions, then the students would answer “yes ma’am,” or “no ma’am.” This demonstrated signs of respect from the children. Teachers trusted their leader. For example, at a professional development meeting, the principal suggested ‘Saturday school’ for students who needed additional support in core subjects. The teachers readily agreed with the principal and one even commented “We trust your decisions. “You’re doing what’s best for our children.”

Documents. Field notes reflected the principal’s commitment to her staff and students. An illustration of P1’s persistence and determination were shown by teachers, staff, parents, and students when they gave her Christmas presents and cards. For instance, the following compliments were noted in the holiday cards: “I appreciate your commitment to our school,” “You’re a joy to work for,” “I want to be like you when I grow up.”

Interviews. During Interview 3, Principal 1 stated that she did not consider herself charismatic. However, she noted how that would be “an essential quality for a principal.” In her opinion, the term charismatic was “synonymous with someone who was flamboyant, comfortable in the spotlight, and stylish.” P1 viewed charismatic leaders as public figures or celebrities, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, or Steve Harvey. She felt that doing the right thing, taking risks, being consistent, and demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct were required competencies of being a principal. She did not see herself
doing anything extraordinary, rather just doing her job.

A contradiction between observable behavior and perception was evident in the findings. Although P1 did not perceive herself as a charismatic leader, her observable behaviors suggested otherwise. This contradiction emerged because of P1’s opinion of a charismatic leader. She envisioned charismatic leaders as public figures. However, on the contrary, parents, teachers, and students respected, admired, and trusted her. So, in essence, P1 was viewed by others as a public figure and considered a charismatic leader, in contrast to her personal perception.

Inspirational motivation

Observations. Inspirational motivation (IM) was the second tenet of the transformational leadership theory. IM was defined as leaders having the ability to motivate and inspire followers. My observations of Principal 1 showed evidence of this component. Principal 1 motivated both her staff and students with incentives and words of encouragement. Appreciation was exhibited to the staff weekly, if not on a daily basis during observations. For example, on Fridays, Principal 1 implemented an incentive day called “T.G.I.F.” –Thanking Great Instructors From [School 1]. Teachers were randomly selected to pull from a goodie bag of prizes. Motivation was shown to students through award assemblies and school dances. At the end of every six weeks, students who received all A’s and B’s on their report cards were rewarded with a dance in the gym. Student behavior had to be satisfactory as well. In addition, students were praised often throughout the school day. When students demonstrated satisfactory behavior, then they were rewarded with character bucks. Character bucks could be redeemed in the school store for prizes.

Principal 1 inspired her staff by her presence throughout the campus. She roamed the halls frequently during the day. P1 attended teacher professional development workshops to
encourage teachers during the implementation process of best practices and strategies learned during those sessions. The sheer presence and accessibility of Principal 1 gave the teachers the reassurance they needed to perform. P1 was available to address any discipline concerns, morning and/or afternoon dismissal issues, and supported teachers during classroom transitions and school programs. Principal 1 further demonstrated support with non-verbal and verbal communication skills. Her body language was a clear indicator of good non-verbal communication skills. She made eye contact often, smiled, and stood in a non-threatening stance with the teachers, parents, and students. When expressing her verbal communication skills, Principal 1 kept her tone in a moderate to low voice.

*Documents.* Principal 1 gave her staff birthday cards on their designated day. This showed her appreciation of them, which in turn influenced the motivation of teachers on the campus. Emails encouraged teamwork and optimism among the teachers. Staff memos provided information in an inspirational way. Minutes from professional development meetings reflected encouragement and support. Principal 1 was always very optimistic at grade level and staff development meetings. P1 kept a positive attitude and remained hopeful about the future. A distinction between the first tenet—charisma—and this tenet is that pure optimism does not always attract followers. Optimism is merely an attitude, while charisma is part of an individual’s personality. Emails were inspirational and closed with a motivational phrase, such as “The best of the best.”

The school website as well as social networking sites were kept up to date and encouraged community participation at school activities and/or events. Social networking sites included Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. An excerpt from the school website entitled the “Principal’s Corner” bolstered the school’s high expectations of student academic success.
through collaboration. The “Message from the Principal” indicated the following: “Welcome to another successful school year!” “I encourage and invite you to partner with us because you make the difference!” and “We sincerely appreciate volunteers and recommend that you stay involved in your child’s education.” The website also contained a link to the school’s calendar of events.

Bulletin boards and displays encouraged students to read and go to college. For example, in February during Black history month, pictures and books of African American inventors were displayed throughout the school. Also, school bulletin boards were covered with colleges and universities of staff members, as well as famous celebrities.

Interviews. During Interview 3, Principal 1 spoke with confidence and optimism. She stated that she offered words of encouragement and was a very appreciative person. She recognized her staff consistently for being part of the team. She saw the good in people and asserted that she looks “at the glass half full, rather than half empty.” P1 stated in Interview 2,

Every meeting, *every* time we have some type of professional development, any time we sit down and meet, we always start with celebrations and recognitions. It’s always a positive note! I really try to lead by example. And over time, I’ve practiced the poker face and so I make sure that no matter what cards I’m holding in my hand, you’ll never see me sweat.

This statement further validated the principal’s display of optimism. Principal 1’s enthusiasm was felt even when she talked about her campus. She was able to lead with confidence and had the ability to remain hopeful during a time of crisis. This attitude helped reassure the teachers and staff that everything was going to be all right. In most cases, she noted that teachers rarely knew if something went wrong because of her cheerful demeanor.

Inspirational motivation was abundantly apparent across all data sources for Principal 1. It was obvious during the observations, collection of documents, and interview process.
Principal 1 truly motivated teachers and students in being their best. In turn, she created a culture of trust, respect, and determination.

Intellectual stimulation

*Observations.* Intellectual stimulation (IS), the third tenet of the transformational leadership theory, was defined as leaders capable of instilling innovative approaches in followers. Minutes from grade level and staff development meetings reflected the principal’s desire to fully engage students with creativity. If the teachers needed educational supplies to enhance their instruction, then the principal would look over the budget or have the secretary check the school’s supply closet. If materials or funds were available, these were readily supplied.

*Documents.* Authentic student work was evident in all of the classrooms.

In a fourth grade classroom, the teacher used creative ways to teach synonyms (Figure 4.1). The fourth graders expanded their writing skills by discovering unfamiliar words. First, the teacher read a book entitled *The Boy Who Loved Words* by Roni Schotter to the students.

![Figure 4.1. Reading lesson.](image)

In this activity, the students shared some unfamiliar words with the class, and then cut the words from a magazine to display to the class the word tree. If a student was speaking and could not come up with the right word on their own, then they referred to their word tree for help. This creative activity was important because it encouraged the students to become better writers by
using descriptive, inspiring, and dynamic words as part of their daily conversations. In both instances, student work was displayed in the hallway on bulletin boards to show the unique efforts of the students. The principal encouraged teachers to show students’ innovative thinking in displays similar to this throughout the building.

Interviews. During Interview 2, P1 stated how she encouraged the teachers to be innovative. She wanted them to seek outside resources, such as conferences and professional development. Teachers did not necessarily have to follow the textbook page by page, although they followed the state curriculum, and district scope and sequence. She supported the influx of technology tools provided by the district in the form of document cameras and smartboards, and encouraged her teachers to use these to support intellectual stimulation in the classrooms.

Individualized consideration

Observations. Principal 1 was very visible on campus. She spent minimal time in her office, which allowed her the opportunity to interact with and give teachers timely feedback. Principal 1 was also available to her staff for impromptu coaching sessions. For instance, P1 spent many hours coaching her assistant principal. During professional development meetings, the principal served more or less as a facilitator. She knew that teamwork was one strategy you could not pay for. She was very devoted to considering each staff member’s needs, skills, and worked toward their collective and individual development.

Documents. Principal 1 encouraged her secretary to use technology in innovative ways. For example, the school calendar was shared with staff via email, as well as updated on the campus’ website for easy accessibility. Principal 1 was supportive of these measures because she pointed out that it was more cost efficient to provide electronic calendar updates. She stated it would save money on copy paper, as well as the time wasted on making those copies for
everyone. The secretary accepted her lead and support.

At School 1, role models were vital to implement a college-going culture. The school’s website advertised for professionals for their annual career day and included nurses, financial planners, physicians, military personnel, attorneys, business owners, teachers, and mechanics. The principal sought community people interested in spending time with students discussing their specific occupation, the use of elementary subjects within their respective fields, and the importance of college education towards achieving these professions. Community members, comprised of both males and females, mirrored the races/ethnicities reflective of the student demographics. Student demographics included 76% African Americans, 17% Hispanics, 4% White, and 3% other. The annual career day gave students first-hand knowledge of occupations, as well as what it takes to get there, from community members who lived in their neighborhoods, and represented them racially and ethnically.

 Interviews. Interview 2 allowed for Principal 1 to expound on her leadership style. She stated:

Well, I do consider myself a situational leader. I also believe that influence has more of an impact opposed to intimidation. I believe that collaboration is of the utmost importance, when decisions are made. I believe in teambuilding. And back to situational leadership, I believe that each situation presents itself, and so I need to respond accordingly. So, certain individuals may need more straight forward, more, here are my expectations, this is where it is, and more, micromanaging, as in others who may not need as much because they’re just great workers, great individuals, do what they supposed to do anyway. So, I do try to respond to each situation as appropriate.

During the interview, Principal 1 stated that she is a firm believer of mentorship, for both teachers and students. She mentors on a daily basis. She said wherever the need is, then that is where she is. In addition, she made sure there were mentorship programs for the students. The campus focused on daily character development. Character development consisted of the following six character pillars: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, kindness, and
citizenship. These pillars were posted upon entering the corridor of the school. Classes received ‘character cash’ from the P1 when the entire class exhibited exceptional behavior in the hallways and cafeteria. Classes earned incentives whenever they obtained increments of 25 ‘character cash.’ Individual students had the opportunity to earn “shining star” coupons. Students who earned the maximum number of “shining star” coupons in their class were rewarded every six weeks with an ice cream party.

Individualized consideration was a major precept demonstrated by Principal 1. It was obvious during the observations, collection of documents, and interview process. Principal 1 served as a role model, mentor, and coach on a daily basis.

Principal 2

Charismatic leadership

Observations. The daily interactions between the principal and the teachers, staff, parents, and students seemed genuine and sincere. During my observations, the principal remained calm, confident, and fearless. This was noticed during morning arrival, after-school dismissal, and at school programs. If parents were in a hurry to pick up their children, then she reiterated safety processes and reminded them of the school’s early release procedures. Every parent showed identification to the receptionist, who scanned it through a Raptor security system. Also, visitors showed great adoration towards the principal. Guests expressed their gratitude to the principal for being a great leader. They spoke very highly of her. For instance, a representative from a local organization told the front office staff “Y’all have a wonderful principal. She always keeps her word.” This proved that the principal was reliable and trustworthy.

Documents. Field notes revealed P2’s resilience. For instance, Principal 2 kept a
reflection journal. She jotted her feelings down during the day. In one entry, P2 wrote down a saying, “Always keep your promises”, from one of her mentors. She penned the importance of being accountable and maintaining people’s trust. The principal’s office was decorated with wall plaques with the following words: faith, hope, and dreams.

**Interviews.** During Interview 3, Principal 2 stated she might have some charismatic traits. However, she firmly stated, “I am not, nor do I consider myself, a charismatic leader.” She noted that there was a big difference between the two phrases. She viewed President Barack Obama and even local pastors as a representation of charismatic leaders. She imagined a charismatic leader as “someone running around like an Energizer bunny.” P2 said pastors have the ability to gather crowds and influence them with sermons. She suggested that students might idolize the commander-in-chief, but not an administrator. P2 went on to note that “I’m happy our students—especially our African American boys—no longer have to dream about being the first black president, but now I can show them one. I can tell them dream big. Anything’s possible.”

Findings revealed a contradiction between observed behaviors and perception. Due to P2’s humility, she did not consider herself a charismatic leader. She believed that this term was more befitting for an icon or legend. She did not feel she had paid her dues or earned the title of being a great influence. However, daily observations of P2 on campus reflected otherwise. Parents trusted her decisions, students and staff respected her, and visitors were honored to be in her presence. From the description of a charismatic leader, P2 represents a clear example of this type of leadership style.

**Inspirational motivation**

**Observations.** Inspirational motivation (IM) was the second tenet of the transformational leadership theory. IM was defined as leaders having the ability to motivate and inspire their
followers. It was a dominant tenet throughout the research with Principal 2. Inspirational motivation was an important feature demonstrated by Principal 2 throughout the duration of the observation period. Principal 2 motivated her staff and students with incentives and words of encouragement. Based on observation, Principal 2 celebrated her staff’s birthdays. For example, on her secretary’s birthday, the entire office sang happy birthday and the principal presented her with a cake and a gift of appreciation. This boosted school morale.

Students were encouraged on a daily basis. Principal 2 offered lavish praise to her students. In the hallways, she commended good behavior with accolades. Some of her positive comments included “good job,” “look how straight the line is,” and “wonderful display of citizenship.” Students would often smile in return and beam with a heart of gratitude.

Principal 2’s demeanor reflected confidence and poise. In staff meetings, she talked about the importance of having good role models for children. She stated, “Your class is a direct reflection of you.” She praised teachers for having good classroom management.

Documents. Principal 2 recognized her staff on birthdays. Minutes from the professional development meetings encouraged teachers to use best strategies with students. Emails from the principal ended with “Have a SUPER day!” in her closing signature, as well as a motivational quote. The school calendar promoted events, which celebrated diversity. For example, celebrations for the Black History Program and Cinco de Mayo Celebration were on the annual calendar. Hard copies were made available for parents in the front office. As displayed on the entrance sign to the school, students, teachers, parents, and visitors felt a welcoming environment (Figure 4.2).
A college-going culture resonated throughout the campus. From a physical aspect, classroom doors and bulletin boards were decorated with each teacher’s college alma mater (Figure 4.3). In addition, on certain Fridays, the staff wore their collegiate or paraphernalia t-shirts. Paraphernalia was attire from the staff members’ sorority or fraternity while they were attending college, either academically or socially. From an academic perspective, teachers taught students with a rigorous curriculum and implemented best practices. This stemmed from ongoing partnerships with local colleges.

Interviews. Principal 2 encouraged people on a daily basis. Encouragement came in the form of praise and recognition. P2 knew the significance in giving people accolades. She acknowledged them frequently for doing a good job. She stated:
People always say, I don’t ever have to be acknowledged. *Yes, you do.* You want to be. Who doesn’t want to be acknowledged? But people will say that all the time. You don’t have to tell me I’m doing a good job. You want people to tell you you’re doing a good job, so that’s not the truth. So, you do want somebody to tell you you’re doing a good job. So, I make sure that I acknowledge what people have done and instill what people have and try to encourage them to do better.

Inspirational motivation was a major precept demonstrated by Principal 2. It was obvious during the observations, collection of documents, and interview process. Principal 2 truly motivated teachers and students in being their best. In turn, she created a culture of trust, respect, and determination.

Intellectual stimulation

*Observations.* To improve academic performance, the principal implemented a program called “No Worksheet Wednesday.” This program required teachers to be creative when doing lesson plans. Students were not to use worksheets at any time on Wednesdays. Teachers had to think of innovative ways to promote active student participation. On this day of the week, teachers were compelled to use more technology, such as computers, overhead projectors, and other educational software. Other teachers used more hands-on projects. For example, the 5th grade science teachers did science labs on Wednesdays.

During staff meetings, the principal encouraged her staff to ‘think outside the box’. This led the teachers to challenge the students intellectually in all subjects and at every grade level. For example, students answered questions using student response systems or clickers. This allowed for immediate feedback from the teacher, while engaging the students with technology. In other classrooms, students created cutting edge science fair projects. One example of a project included the use of an iPad application for measuring sound. Ultimately, students engaged in more project-based learning, which encouraged higher-order thinking skills.

*Documents.* Principal 2 encouraged her staff to use innovative ways to communicate with
parents. For example, school activities were posted on popular social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Principal 2 also encouraged her secretary to use technology in innovative ways. For example, the school calendar was shared with staff via email, as well as uploaded on the campus’ shared drive for easy accessibility.

**Interviews.** P2 expressed her desire to have cutting-edge technology for every classroom and was somewhat intolerant of excuses for lack of creativity. She knew resourcefulness was part of the solution for increased academic achievement. During interview 2, Principal 2 stated:

> I encourage my staff all the time. I’ll tell them to come up with something. If you’re saying this is not going to work, or that is not going to work, don’t come telling me that it’s not gonna work, if you don’t have anything else to try. So, I always encourage them to think of different things and make sure you have a solution or make sure you have a plan for it.

Intellectual stimulation was demonstrated by Principal 2. It was obvious during the observations, collection of documents, and interview process. Principal 2 aspired for her teachers to think outside the box. In turn, she empowered them to be creative and innovative with their lesson plans.

**Individualized consideration**

**Observations.** Principal 2 had an open door policy. Staff members often took advantage of this policy. The principal prepared teacher assistants to become teachers, as well as developed teachers to become administrators. Any questions pondered about their next career move or a promotional opportunity, staff members consulted with the principal. Consultation happened on a case-by-case basis.

**Documents.** Emails from P2 reflected her support and overall commitment to her campus. P2 was an effective coach. She provided frequent and meaningful feedback. For example, after teacher appraisals, she immediately sent the teachers a detailed electronic copy with the rubric.
completed and comments specific comments during their evaluation. Her emails to her staff members were non-threatening, non-judgmental, and avoided criticism. P2 was non-confrontational when it came to staff meetings. The minutes reflected her spirit of teamwork, collaboration, and honesty.

**Interviews.** During Interview 1, the question was asked, “How did you become a principal?” Principal 2 stated that during her first year of teaching she became professionally close with some of the campus administrators. Her colleagues, as well as her former principals, this informal observation of other administrators and formal mentoring inspired her to pursue the next step. She explained in the interview how she perceived herself as a leader in the following quote:

“I’m the type of leader that likes to give people an opportunity to do their job. I’m gonna give you the information that you need to be successful and then I’m just gonna monitor what you do. By no means, am I a micromanager. I can’t stand to be micromanaged, so I definitely don’t like to micromanage other people.”

In the final interview, Principal 2 affirmed the importance of students of color having culturally competent role models. She stated:

I think just right off, it’s just being of the same ethnic group as most of the students. You know most of my students are African American and so they relate to me, just by, before they know anything about me, they just feel they relate to me just because I’m African American. But I think the first thing, is that I’m also the majority of the students are African American. The other thing is that I do know just from my background of being African American, young ladies, or what some of the kids deal with, you know, I do know what some African American parents deal with, you know I’m an African American parent, my parents are African American, so I can relate to some of the things that they go through, Not all!, just because we’re all black, you know, but I do relate to some of the things that, some of the situations that they deal with. And, I mean, it’s just an understanding of well now that I know, these are some of the things that you are dealing with, that I know how we can work through them and try to fix them. I would just say those are some of the characteristics. And I know what it takes for an African American student to do well and be successful, because I am, so I know what it takes.

Principal 2 discussed the significance of being an African American role model. The
majority of her students were African American, so she knew she played a vital role in their success. It was important for her to connect with her students. P2 understood their culture and family history. Although families deal with different hardships, she could still relate to them. Also, as a former African American student, she remembered what it took to get her to where she was today.

Individual Consideration was a major precept demonstrated by Principal 2. It was obvious during the observations, collection of documents, and interview process. Principal 2 coached teachers and staff in their quest for suitable career paths. They respected her as a role model and followed her advice.

Cross-Case Analysis

Three initial themes emerged from the interviews, documents, and observations with the two African American female principals. First, the principals were motivators. Second, participants were visionaries. Finally, the administrators were coaches, mentors, and role models.

Motivator

Both principals were very influential on their campuses. They motivated their students and staff on a daily basis. Each leader showed consistent appreciation for their campus with incentives and rewards. Both principals gave thank you notes, birthday cards, and accolades on a consistent basis. They inspired students and staff members to be their very best and reach their fullest potential.

The difference between P1 and P2 was how they motivated others. P1 would say ‘Go for it.’ However, P2 inquired specifically, ‘Why do you want to do that? What is the reason?’ P2 asked more reflective questions, while P1 just agreed excitedly and cheerfully.
Visionary

Each principal encouraged teachers to think outside the box. They wanted students to have fun learning. Sometimes this was with or without technology. However, it met high expectations and performance standards. Both principals encouraged higher order thinking skills, problem-solving techniques, and real world applications.

There were variances on each campus. P2 gave teachers a directive in terms of No Worksheet Wednesday. This was not optional. However, P1 encouraged more hands-on activities, but did not set aside a specific day. In addition, P1 sought more family nights to show parents creative ways to teach students at home.

Coach, mentor, and role model

Each administrator was an effective coach, mentor, and role model. They considered the feelings of others. Each principal led by example. They were well respected in the community and prided themselves on having the best campus in the world. When P1 and P2 coached staff members, they were committed listeners. They gave others their full attention and minimized interruptions.

There were a couple of differences between the two principals. For example, if teachers had a problem, then P1 gave them advice or took matters into her own hands. On the other hand, P2 gave teachers a sense of empowerment. She let them resolve the issues on their own, as long it was not detrimental to the students. Another distinction between the two principals was mentorship. P1 mentored students and staff members everyday, whereas, P2 mentored students and staff members on an ‘as needed basis’.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of this multiple case study. When comparing the two
principals, there were slight differences in the operation of their campuses. When the data were analyzed across the four tenets of the transformational leadership theory, all precepts aligned during the observations, collection of documents, and interviews. The principals in this study conveyed the importance of motivation, inspiration, innovation, creativity, coaching, and mentoring as strong leadership traits for African American female leaders in urban settings.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This study examined evidence of transformational leadership factors of two African American female administrators in high achieving elementary schools. The study used the four tenets of transformational leadership, charismatic leadership (CL) or idealized influence (II), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC) as a foundation for analyzing data that included observations, documents, and interviews. Interviews were based in accordance with the three-interview series (Seidman, 2006). All data were analyzed using a qualitative software program called ATLAS.ti. This chapter presents the participant characteristics, discussion of the findings, emergent themes, an interpretation of the findings, personal reflection, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

Participant Characteristics

Two African American female principals met the criteria for this multiple case study, by serving as school leaders in high achieving, predominately African American populated, elementary schools. Both female principals participated fully with the observations, document collection, and interviews. The women were in their late thirties and married with children. Both women’s grandparents played a significant role in their lives and encouraged greatness. Moreover, both were first generation college students. Although education was a second career choice, both principals were very successful in guiding the elementary schools where they served to high levels of academic achievement.

Discussion of the Findings

After the observations, document collection, and interviews were completed, each participant was given the interview transcription to review for accuracy. Based on this follow up discussion, principals agreed with the outcome of the results. In addition, both principals stated
that they thoroughly enjoyed the experience and were curious to learn more about other leadership theories. Although all four tenets were represented in the study, the results of the observations, documents, and interviews combined revealed that the principals’ skills were mainly attributed to the following two tenets: inspirational motivation and individualized consideration.

Principals included in this multiple case study demonstrated attributes of these factors by how they interacted with teachers and students on their campuses. Inspirational motivation (IM) means that the school leaders could easily motivate and inspire their followers (Bass, 1998). For example, Principal 1 encouraged students with character bucks, award assemblies, and school dances in order to achieve good grades. She rewarded the students individually and collectively. Likewise, Principal 2 motivated students with incentives, words of encouragement, and praise.

Additionally, the participants instilled confidence and hope into the teachers and staff members. Both principals mentioned the importance of keeping their staff happy. P1 treated her staff with tokens of appreciation, such as candy or a ‘wear jeans to work’ pass. Teachers would check their mailboxes often looking for appreciation goodies. P2 delivered birthday cards and thank you cards throughout the year. She said, “I make sure that I acknowledge what people have done and instill what people have and try to encourage them to do better.”

Individualized consideration (IC) also contributed greatly to how the leaders led successful schools. This tenet was significant in the development of teacher leaders. Individuals in this tenet pay “special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor” (Bass, 1998, p. 6). Both principals were effective coaches, mentors, and role models. For example, P1 provided her teachers and staff with frequent and timely feedback. This interaction allowed for meaningful, impromptu coaching sessions. P2
coached teacher assistants to become teachers, as well as developed teachers to become administrators. She was proud to see educators seeking promotional opportunities.

More importantly, each principal loved mentoring students. P1 mentored students on a daily basis. She believed it was her due diligence to provide mentorship to the next generation. Principal 1 said, “Students need good mentors, especially when they are swayed by so many outside influences—such as the television, radio, cell phones, and Internet. We compete daily just to capture their attention for a moment at school.” P2 mentored students on an ‘as needed basis’. She knew that positive role models were important for student success. P2 partnered with outside organizations to show students the benefits of keeping good grades and working hard in school.

The other two tenets, charismatic leadership (CL) and intellectual stimulation (IS), were evident in the leadership of the two principals. Charismatic leaders are “admired, respected, and trusted” (Bass, 1998, p. 5). The participants in this study were, by definition, charismatic leaders. Although the principals did not perceive themselves as charismatic leaders, characteristics were prevalent during the observations and document retrieval. Students, teachers, staff members, parents, and community members respected and trusted their decisions, and adored them as individuals.

Intellectual stimulation (IS) was the least documented tenet. The principals in this study, to some degree, did “stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situation in new ways” (Bass, 1998, p. 5) and showed signs of intellectual stimulation. They encouraged teachers to use technology to engage students in lessons and activities. However, some of the activities were not outside the scope of their normal teacher duties.
The findings from the study indicate clearly that transformational leadership tenets were apparent in both leaders. Bass indicated that transformational leadership leads to success because leaders support and engage with their followers. This was very apparent in the two principals studied. The two principals showed several signs of inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence or charismatic leadership. These signs lead to several emergent themes.

Emergent Themes

Motivator

The first theme to emerge from the study was motivator. Both principals were very influential on their campuses. They motivated their students and staff on a daily basis. Each leader showed consistent appreciation for their campus with incentives and rewards. Both principals gave thank you notes, birthday cards, and accolades on a consistent basis. They inspired students and staff members to be their very best and reach their fullest potential. The difference between P1 and P2 was how they motivated others. P1 would say ‘Go for it.’ However, P2 inquired specifically, ‘Why do you want to do that? What is the reason?’ P2 asked more reflective questions, while P1 just agreed excitedly and cheerfully.

Visionary

The second emergent theme from the study was visionary. A visionary has a powerful imagination, wisdom, and an innovative skill set. Each principal loved to tell stories and had a vivid imagination. They viewed technology as a pathway for future success. Both principals shared their vision with the entire staff. The visions were posted on the walls, typed in school handbooks, and repeated during the morning announcements. High expectations set the tone for the overall campus climate. Both principals were innovative in the ways they addressed student
engagement. There were variances on each campus.

P2 implemented a superhero theme as a creative approach for students to think outside the box. For example, each classroom picked a superhero and revised it to fit the 21st century. One classroom selected Superman as a modern day hero. On a poster in the hallway, Superman was using an iPad to track the number of people’s lives he saved on a daily basis. P1 gave students think tanks in the lunchroom. Think tanks allowed students to travel through past, present, and future events. One activity was the cell phone journey. The principal showed pictures of a cell phone from two decades ago to now. Then, she asked the students to draw a picture of how the cell phone will look ten years from now. A student from each cafeteria table stood and told his or her peers their thoughts on technology advancement.

Coach, mentor, and role model

The third emergent theme from the study was the impact each participant represented in an overarching way with her followers. Each administrator was an effective coach, mentor, and role model. They considered the feelings of others. Each principal led by example. They were well respected in the community and prided themselves on having the best campus in the world. When P1 and P2 coached staff members, they were committed listeners. They gave others their full attention and minimized interruptions. For example, both principals coached their secretaries on best practices in communication. The secretaries shared school calendars electronically in an effort to save paper, as well as time. They picked one day per week to distribute any digital updates to parents and the rest of the school staff.

There were a couple of differences between the two principals. For example, if teachers had a problem, then P1 gave them advice or took matters into her own hands. On the other hand, P2 gave teachers a sense of empowerment. She let them resolve the issues on their own, as long
it was not detrimental to the students. Another distinction between the two principals was mentorship. P1 mentored students and staff members everyday, whereas, P2 mentored students and staff members on an ‘as needed basis’.

These three themes relate directly to the theoretical premise of the study by showing the profound impact leaders have on their followers, Transformational Leadership as a central focus of leadership style. These themes were apparent in these ways. Principals demonstrated the use of motivational strategies, such as giving thank you cards, consistently while building relationships with teachers and students. They portrayed the act of visionaries by challenging student thinking to the next level. Students were very creative and innovative when addressing futuristic questions. Administrators served as coaches, mentors, and role models. They were attentive, detail-oriented, and committed listeners. Although these three themes were significant in the results of the study, several other themes emerged outside of the transformational leadership theory. These three additional themes, which had no direct relationship to the transformational leadership theory, had a profound effect on the insight of African American female administrators serving as leaders in high achieving elementary schools.

Spirituality

The fourth emergent theme was spirituality. Spirituality was used as a guiding force in the two African American principals. Both principals accredited all of their professional, as well as personal, success to God. They credited their achievements solely to a higher power. According to both, spirituality was a testament to their uniqueness as people and leaders. Both principals had humble spirits and depended on God to guide their footsteps and make wise choices daily. Principal 1 stated, “I always put my spiritual life first. And that’s a huge thing. I always ask God to order my steps, let other people see Him through me, because I think that’s
what makes a true difference in my life.” On the same note, Principal 2 stated,

I am a Christian. And I do believe, or I don’t do anything, can’t do anything without God. So, I wake up in the morning and thank God for waking me up and say walk with me; to lead my footsteps because of course, it’s not just me that’s doing it. So, I do rely on a lot; I mean I get upset about things, you know things aren’t going the way that they’re supposed to be, and people not doing what they’re supposed to do, but I don’t like to show it outwardly, just because I don’t want people to think that’s going to affect me and it’s gonna cause a problem with how I operate the school. So, I just go back in my little corner somewhere in my office, say a little prayer, Lord help me today or whatever the case may be.

These testimonies were solemn attestations into the lives of two African American female administrators using Christian principles to be effective principals. The participants believed God guided their steps in their daily decision-making. They attributed their success entirely to a higher power outside of themselves.

Community Engagers

The fifth emergent theme was community engagers. Although research on successful African American school leaders reveals that connection to community is important (Siddle Walker, 2009; Horsford, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Diamond & Gomez, 2004), the two principals approached community involvement differently. Principal 1 was immersed in community events. In order to connect with the students, staff members, parents, and civil leaders; she lived, shopped, and attended church in the neighborhood. P1’s campus had a high level of parental involvement. In contrast, principal 2 lived outside of the boundaries of the school district. She frequently connected with community members via board meetings, emails, and community outings. In addition, P2 welcomed parents and guardians to volunteer often.

Culture

The sixth and final theme to emerge from the study was culture. Cultural understanding was an essential part of these two principals’ leadership styles. There are nine universals of
culture, which include various forms of behavior from different parts of the world (Cleveland, Craven, & Danfelser, 1993). These cultural universals include: material culture; arts, play, and recreation; social organization; language and non-verbal communication; social control; conflict and warfare; education; worldview; and economic organization. A cultural universal is “an element, pattern, trait, or institution that is common to all human cultures on the planet” (p. 1).

The principals made sure the material culture (basics) of the students was taken care of. Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and personal possessions were the essential elements of material culture. Both principals ensured that each student had breakfast and lunch as part of the regular school day program. In addition, they partnered with an agency to provide children with a special backpack filled with non-perishable, kid-friendly food over the weekend. Partner agencies work with the North Texas Food Bank’s Food for Kids Program. It only costs five dollars per weekend to feed students in need of assistance. Each principal worked with her nurse and counselor to supply clothing and personal possessions. If a student didn’t have on an appropriate shirt or pants or needed a replacement size, then the nurse gave the student one from the donation closet, which was filled with extra uniforms. Similarly, the counselor furnished school supplies (personal possessions) for those students in need. This was done on a case-by-case basis. In regards to transportation and shelter, the principals worked with their staff to make sure each student had a ride home and a place to go after school.

The second culture universal is arts, play and recreation. Each principal in this study created the master school schedule for their campuses and provided a fine arts program. The fine arts program included music, art, physical education (PE), library, and computer. Students attended a weekly fine arts rotation to keep them physically fit, as well as enrich their study of the arts. In addition to PE class, students received 15 minutes of recess time after lunch. Both
participants exposed their students to the arts by sponsoring school programs and providing field trips, such as to the African American Museum and Perot Museum. The African American Museum allowed an opportunity for the students to see artwork and artifacts by African American artists. At the Perot Museum, students compared the jaws and teeth of meat eaters and plant eaters, explored past and present predator-prey adaptations, learned how ancient animal tracks are beneficial in family group structure and behavior, and examined winter survival strategies of modern mammals.

The third cultural universal is social organization. Both principals built character in their students through social organizations. For example, Principal 1 adapted a Reading Buddies Program where students of different grade levels read to each other. Students increased their vocabulary, developed self-esteem and social skills, and enhanced their love of books and reading. Students at Principal 2’s campus were involved in after school enrichment programs, such as reading club, math club, chess club, and computer club.

Language and non-verbal communication is the fourth cultural universal. Principal 1 had a special workshop during Black history month in February, in which the students could learn African dances and language from various tribes. Principal 2 encouraged teachers to teach students sign language in Kindergarten classes to help with nonverbal communication.

Social control is the fifth cultural universal. In this universal, individuals learn about systems and government institutions and rewards and punishments. Both principals ensured students learned about systems and governments through social studies integration with other subjects, such as writing. Each principal implemented campus wide discipline management plans. Both principals implemented the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (P.B.I.S.) as the primary system. For example, the principals would say, “You’re on Level Zero” versus
‘be quiet’ to get the students’ attention during cafeteria duty. With these preventive measures in place, the majority of the students maintained social control during the day. Thus, the administrators did not deal with a lot of discipline issues.

Conflict and warfare are the sixth universal of culture. Both principals maintained an ‘open door’ policy to any resolve any conflicts, in the event someone needed to talk to them. They always remained neutral and acted as a mediator in disagreements between staff members. Both leaders created a ‘family’ culture; meaning yelling, name-calling, fighting, and cursing were unacceptable. Everyone had to remain professional and treat the school as if it were a second home. Both principals conducted drills to assist with practices of warfare. They set up fire and tornado drills, as well as lock down drills in the cases of extreme emergencies.

Education—informal and formal— is the seventh universal of culture. In this study, principals knew the significance of informal education. Informal education happens outside the classroom and typically at home. African American principals were acquainted with linguistic phrases or slang (Ebonics), popular music, and family history to bridge the educational gap. They understood that relationships developed outside the standard school setting had a great influence on students. P1 stated:

I believe that part of the culture of the African American women comes from having strong African American women around in their life, like a grandmother, or great aunt. I feel as I lead by example, I have to be greater than great. Children are watching, parents are counting on me to help raise their kids in a sense. Build character in them. Your school really becomes another family to you. When they smile, you smile. When they hurt, you hurt. Our culture is grounded in sticking together. For example, someone might talk about you, but don’t let someone else—outside the family-talk about you because the community will take you down. It is truly an honor to serve as a principal and be African American and then of course a woman. So, uniquely, lead by example, do the right thing, and finally accept no excuses. Being raised by African Americans parents, I have to make it happen. With money or without money, just get the job done because people-your family is counting on you.

Also, the leaders were cognizant of the importance of formal education. Both principals
believed in a progressive approach (project-based learning, hands-on activities) to teaching and learning. They invested time and money to ensure teachers had the best instructional supplies and attended professional development. By doing so, teachers continued to grow and instruct students with a rigorous curriculum.

Worldview is the eighth universal of culture. It is the overall perspective on how individuals view the world. In particular, worldview embraces the thoughts and ideas which people formulate based on belief systems, religion, and spirituality. Although the principals understood the separation of church and state in school districts, they also recognized the necessity to keep religion as part of the African American heritage. Morning announcements included the traditional pledges and a moment of silence. The entire campus stood and recited the United States Pledge of Allegiance, “I pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.” (U.S. History, 2013, p. 1). Then, the Texas Pledge, “Honor the Texas flag; I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one state under God, one and indivisible.” (Texas Almanac, 2014, p.1). After that, a moment of silence is held for one minute in order to allow students to prepare mentally for the day through meditation, reflection, or prayer. Both pledges include the word God, so students viewed it as acceptable to use on a daily basis. Outside of these school rituals, both principals celebrated Christmas and Kwanzaa. Christmas is a religious holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God. Kwanzaa is a celebration, which allows African Americans to celebrate themselves and their history. Each principal put up Christmas trees in the school, allowed teachers to decorate their classrooms, and gave Kwanzaa gifts which reflected Afrocentrism—cultural ideology and artifacts. For example, P2 gave the art teacher a statue of a Black Santa Claus and an African American tribal mask.
Finally, economic organization is the last universal of culture. Principals in this study tried to help students understand the cost of living and minimum wage. They encouraged students to attend college, so that they could have a good job and provide for their families. Principal 1 partnered with local banks and had representatives come speak to the children about saving money. The banks offered the parents minor accounts for their children free of charge. Principal 2 raised money for the school through fundraisers. The fundraisers helped with student materials, field trip costs, and other campus needs. For one fundraiser, the top student from each classroom won a limo ride and pizza for selling the most candy.

Overall, leaders were empowered by incorporating these cultural universals on their respective campus. Culture brought the entire community (principals, students, teachers, parents, and local community members) together. It kept students engaged in classroom assignments, parents participated in school functions, teachers interested in teaching and learning, local community members involved in schools, and principals occupied with advancing their vision for student achievement and good school morale. Culture was seen as an important factor, as it relates to the creation of high-performing schools.

Interpretation of the Findings

All tenets of transformational leadership were clearly observed in both principals. These tenets included charismatic leadership or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration by these principals. Although the two female principals did not perceive themselves as charismatic leaders, the observations and documents reflected otherwise. During the interview process, the principals identified themselves as situational (P1) and servant (P2) leaders instead. These two leadership styles have some of the same characteristics as transformational leadership, yet stand out as distinct on several points.
Situational leadership is defined as the ability for managers to adjust leadership styles based on the present situation. As Hersey and Blanchard (1988) suggest, situational leadership encompasses four tenets: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Principal 1 considered herself a situational leader. From the observations, she only directed when she had to deliver top-down directives from central administration to her staff. For instance, an extended school day was implemented in order to make up for inclement weather days. Three days of instructional days were lost due to weather conditions, so 45 minutes of additional instructional time were added onto the end of the school day. Outside of this first component, the principal coached, supported, and delegated on a consistent basis. These last three elements align with the transformational leadership tenets.

First, coaching – a central theme, which emerged from the study—aligns with the individualized consideration (IC) tenet. In the IC tenet, “transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor.” (Bass, 1998, p. 6). It is also where delegation and support takes place. According to Bass, “Delegated tasks are monitored to see if the followers need additional direction or support and to assess progress; ideally, followers do not feel they are being checked on.” (p. 6). Supporting was a natural part of the principalship. It was an action in the following prominent tenets: charismatic leadership (CL) or idealized influence (II), inspirational motivation (IM), and intellectual stimulation (IM). Principal 1 supported teachers, staff, student, parents, and community members by advocating high expectations for all students (CL), sponsoring school programs (IM), and promoting campus wide innovation and creativity (IM).

Principal 2 considered herself a servant leader. In 1970, Greenleaf coined the term servant leadership. Servant leadership is defined as “a philosophy and set of practices that
enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world” (p. 1). According to Spears (2010), the ten characteristics of a servant leader are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. These characteristics do not match the definition (Bass, 1998) of charismatic leadership (CL) used for the purposes of this study. However, these attributes align within the other three tenets: inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC). First, Principal 2 showed awareness, persuasion, and a commitment to building community when interacting with parents. These qualities are reflective of the IM tenet, which “demonstrate(s) commitment to goals and the shared vision” (p. 5). Together, everyone wanted to do what was in the best interest of students. Second, P2 demonstrated conceptualization and foresight. She interpreted her desire for the students to think outside the box by engaging their minds in reflection, journaling, problem solving, and higher-order thinking skills, as an extension of Intellectual Stimulation (IS). Finally, P2 displayed signs of listening, empathy, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of people while communicating with teachers and staff. For instance, these characteristics were obvious during coaching sessions between the principal and teachers and/or staff members. She shared in the emotional experience when problems arose, yet she was deliberate in helping them figure out a positive outcome. During this time, P2 actions fell under the IM tenet.

A closer examination of the two principals’ perceptions of themselves as situational and servant leaders bears some alignment with the tenets of the leadership styles, but not in all instances, particularly in the area of directing. The principals in this study were not controlling, rather they acted as facilitators of learning. Directors tell followers what to do and usually micromanage their followers. On the contrary, these two principals’ only intended purposes
were to assist, help, and support those in need.

Personal Reflection

Race, gender, and religion contributed to access and depth of the research. As an African American woman whose Christian beliefs aligned with the two principals, interviewing the two principals was possible on a higher level, due to the three levels of connectivity. In addition, it was also a challenge to remain unbiased when conducting the research. I overcame the urge to be biased by listening carefully, allowing wait time before I moved to the next question, and probing for additional information. Also, each participant was given the interview transcriptions to read which ensured reliability and validity.

First, I am a woman, which gave me an advantage during the interview process. Both female principals were very candid about their professional, as well as their personal lives. I believe this rapport was naturally accomplished during the field experience. Women have a tendency to be more social, so we talk and share our experiences with other women. In this case, I found it very easy to approach these women about my case study. Secondly, I am African American. This allowed me to connect to each African American administrator from a cultural perspective. African American people support each other in educational endeavors. We connected in several ways. For example, we were all first generation college students, approximately the same age, and had a foundational upbringing by our grandparents. Finally, I am a Christian. With a Christian interviewing another Christian, then it sanctioned respect of the same morals, beliefs, and values. I wholeheartedly believe that gender, race, and religious stance led to the richness of the data collected. The principals knew I understood the separation of church and state in schools. Undoubtedly, this spiritual bond enhanced the entire research experience.
Conclusion

These African American women principals had evidence of transformational leadership qualities, even though both perceived themselves otherwise. Their leadership included the characteristics of situational and servant leadership styles. Perhaps this combination of styles came from their cultural, professional, and personal experiences. Based on this study, the infusion of various leadership styles may be the answer to leading successful, urban elementary schools. Both principals indicated that they did not view themselves as charismatic leaders. However, this was based on their perception of what a charismatic leader is. The leaders related charismatic leaders as public figures or celebrities. In spite of this, it was apparent that the transformational leadership style was a valid theoretical premise for which to compare observed leadership styles of two African American female principals in urban settings.

Overall, transformational leadership served as a valid theoretical lens through which to understand how two African American female principals led high-achieving elementary schools. By listening, observing, and studying their leadership, there was much learned about effective approaches. This theory provides a basis to show how principals encourage and interact with their followers. The relationships built between the leader and followers are extremely valuable when educating students of color. Thus, the transformational leadership theory demonstrates the use of common characteristics and traits in effective leaders.

Emerging themes were linked to the conceptual framework of the transformational leadership theory. The initial themes, motivator, visionary, coach, mentor, and role model reflect the principals’ own attributes. These terms are synonymous with an effective leader’s roles and responsibilities in an educational setting. The last three themes, spirituality, community engager, and culture are influenced by external sources. For example, religious beliefs guide their spirit;
community members involve them in matters outside of the school; and culture comes from their childhood upbringing, as well as societal changes.

Although the last three themes fell outside the realm of the transformational leadership theory, they were still important findings. They provided a link to cultural relevance. The African American female principals in this study affirmed an apparent connection to culture and leadership. However, the transformational leadership theory is missing culture from its doctrine. Notably, the participants expressed church as a foundational place, where African Americans visited routinely to embrace spirituality. This was a traditional part of their cultural experience. In essence, God guided their footsteps in decision-making and setting a dependable plan for their lives. By respecting and trusting the African American leader, it appears that spirituality embodied ways of peace, love, survival, and healing.

Respect and trust are part of the first tenet, charismatic leadership. In addition, principals executed the African proverb, ‘It takes a village to raise a child’. They engaged their communities consistently as a way to mentor students of color and encourage partnerships with parents and community members. Community engagement aligned with the inspirational motivation and individualized consideration factors of the transformational leadership factors. African American female principals were persistent as they embraced the social settings in urban areas. By working together with parents and community members, they knew the importance of power in numbers and the ultimate benefit for students—especially ones from single-parent homes. Culture uniquely ties to the Intellectual Stimulation tenet. The principals were innovative and creative in their approaches to challenge students mentally. They related student interests, such as popular dances and rhythm and blues (R&B) songs, to daily teaching and learning. Given these points, transformational leadership should include a cultural competence
for principals leading students of low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future studies that explore how successful African American female principals use leadership, gained either from formal studies, or informal experiences, would add to the findings discussed here. Studies show African American women hold fewer principalship jobs than men. This could be due to lack of opportunity in non-urban environments. Further, studies should be conducted from the principal perspective. The ability for African American female administrators to rationalize their attitudes and behaviors within a certain leadership theory may have a greater effect on developing leaders in urban settings. By allowing them to voice their opinions, it may shed light on concerns and offer solutions to issues other women of color might experience as well in low socioeconomic areas. African American female principals may be able to improve the administrative experiences for both existing and aspiring educators by replicating this study.

Finally, this study could be replicated through the inclusion of African American women with more years of principal experience. While both principals had at least three years of experience in this study, veteran educators may have offered additional revelations. Seasoned principals may relate differently to transformational leadership theory. Their experience may provide insight on how teaching and learning in the urban setting has evolved over the years. Regardless of age, participants rendered substantial information concerning how they motivate, imagine vision, coach, and mentor in urban elementary schools. Ultimately, leaders are the center of attention in public education due to more rigorous testing standards. Effective principals may offer African American female leaders hope during 21st century demands. Future researchers may potentially study the effects of principals’ attitudes and behaviors toward
standardized testing in public schools, mandates of governments, and technology integration in urban areas.
APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWS
The Three-Interview Series (adapted from the Seidman approach)

Interview One: Focused Life History
1. How did you become a principal?
2. Can you talk a little bit about your childhood and the path which led you to education?
3. How did your parents or relatives influence your career choice?
4. Tell me about your experiences with mentorship.
5. What challenges have been prevalent during your path to principalship?

Interview Two: The Details of Experience
1. Define your leadership style.
2. What are three essential characteristics of a successful leader?
3. How did you lead this campus to be successful?
4. What behaviors or characteristics do you display as a role model to your professional learning community?
5. How do you motivate those around you?
6. Tell me how you encourage creativity and innovation on campus.
7. How often do you coach or mentor others?
8. What characteristics do you think you have as a woman that makes you a successful administrator?
9. Along those same lines, what characteristics do you have as an African American that makes you successful in an urban elementary school?

Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning
1. Given what you have said about your life before you became a principal and given what you have said about your work now, how do you understand transformational leadership in your life?
2. What unique responsibilities do you feel as an African American woman in an urban elementary school?
3. Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future (i.e. 5 years from now)?
APPENDIX B

PRINCIPAL OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
Principal Observation Protocol
2013-2014

Observer: 
Principal: 
Start Time: 

School: 
Date: 
End Time: 

Transformational Leadership
(adapted from Avolio et al., 1997)

1. Charismatic Leadership (CL)

Location component was observed:

Interaction with: 
Tone of voice: 

Example(s): 

Notes: 

Reflection:
2. Inspirational Motivation (IM)

Location component was observed:

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<th>Interaction with:</th>
<th>Tone of voice:</th>
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Example(s):

Notes:

Reflection:

3. Intellectual Stimulation (IS)

Location component was observed:

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<th>Interaction with:</th>
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Example(s):

Notes:

Reflection:
4. Individualized Consideration (IC)

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☐ Research Question

What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American female principals who work at high-achieving, urban elementary schools?
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