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Principal Leadership and School Culture with a School-Wide Implementation of Professional Crisis Management: A Redemptive vs. Punitive Model

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PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL CULTURE WITH A SCHOOL-WIDE
IMPLEMEMTATION OF PROFESSIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT:
A REDEMPTIVE V. PUNITIVE MODEL

by

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DEDICATION

This research paper is about leadership and its influences on culture. While I am indebted to my family, friends, and colleagues for their support, this project is dedicated to my father, Paul Thomas Adams. Although my words were inadequate, the best expressions of your influence in my professional life are found in a letter I wrote to you a couple of years ago on Father's Day.

In my work as principal, much of what I do involves leadership. School administrators must assume the responsibility for everything that takes place in the organization, and therefore, must be students of leadership traits in order to develop their own unique style and capacity to create environments that optimize success.

All of our experiences contribute to who we are becoming, and I have made an important connection to you in the area of leadership. This connection takes me back to your many years in the mill and my two years there as a novice. Early on in your career in the print room, you established yourself as someone whose work and expertise were exemplary. Your consistent high quality performance was recognized, and you were promoted to a supervisory position to oversee the production of a very large department in which the culminating purpose of the entire operation of the mill took place. Your supervisor told you one day, "Come to work tomorrow in your street clothes…I want you to work the line." Among countless other things, you taught me the value of honoring,

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supporting, and encouraging people where they are. This lesson has impacted my personal and professional life in positive ways.

There is a clear sense of your presence in me each day as I "work the line" at my school. I always say that if I could be even a small percentage of the man you are, I will have made something of myself.

With more love and gratitude than I can express…

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When asked by President Mandela how he would inspire his
players to perform beyond their highest expectations, the rugby
captain responded, "I plan to lead by example."

Nelson Mandela, *Playing the Enemy,* 2008

I am indebted to Dr. J. Lynn Harrill and the members of my committee for your inspiration, wisdom, and confidence in me to embark on yet another phase of my becoming. Please accept my deepest appreciation and upmost respect for your contributions and encouragement along the way. This process and my association with you have taken me to another level of understanding of just how much more I have to learn.

I am thankful for my friend, Tim Scipio. As we walked to the parking lot after an Ed. S. class back in 2009, I said with some trepidation, "We have pushed our boats out into some deep water." We made a covenant with each other that night to "stay close and finish strong." Our many rich conversations have been invaluable in my journey, and your friendship is a gift in my life.

I am grateful to the members of our upstate cohort. Your intelligence and perspectives, your willingness to share ideas and speak freely, and your commitment to support my efforts are appreciated. Thank you, Brenda, Carol Anne, Danette, Greg, Nathan, and Tim.

To the participants in the study, you were tireless and energetic in my pursuits. You have enriched my life with your knowledge and devotion to the challenging work of

teaching and leading. It has been an honor to learn so much from you. Thank you for the heart you bring to this amazing work.

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To Duane Dennie, you have been my colleague and companion from the beginning of our efforts to apply behavior theory to daily practice. Our rich conversations, your willingness to hear my ideas and questions, and your trust and confidence have inspired me. I am thankful for you every day, my friend.

And most of all to my family who understood my quest and provided love, prayers, and strength for the journey.

Living in gratitude …

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management (PCM). PCM is a comprehensive and fully integrated system designed to manage crisis situations effectively, safely, and with dignity. While designed primarily to assist individuals in crisis situations, much of the system is comprised of non-physical interventions in the form of crisis prevention strategies and positive reinforcement that were effective with students at all points on the behavior continuum. Behavior Tools, the companion course also based on behavior theory, was introduced in the research site in 2012.

Participants included principals, teachers, and one behavior interventionist from a Title I public school district in the upstate of South Carolina. All participants held certifications in one or both behavior management systems and used the prevention, de-escalation, crisis intervention, and post-crisis strategies in their classrooms and schools.

The findings of this inquiry contributed to the body of literature on the influence of principal leadership and school culture and proposed that without extensive additional training, specifically in behavior theory, educators were ill-equipped to manage the challenging behaviors in today's changing society. The results confirmed that changing adult behaviors by increasing the frequency of positive engagements and reinforcement and embracing a redemptive paradigm of behavior shaping and intervention that

preserved the dignity of each child contributed to high trust, low stress environments that stimulated social and academic success and constituted a shift toward a more positive school culture.

This inquiry was significant in the field of education as it highlighted the need for additional training in behavior theory for school employees, a shift away from a punitive paradigm toward a more redemptive response to behavior that shaped positive school cultures, and the need for district and state policy makers to consider the more comprehensive systems of PCM and Behavior Tools as the state model for behavior management and intervention.

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INTRODUCTION

PART I: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

"In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential

individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that

occur in and around the school building. It is the principal's leadership that sets

the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, and the level of professionalism

and morale of teachers and the degree of concern for what students may or may

not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the

school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the

attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant,

innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if

students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to

the principal's leadership as the key to success" (U. S. Senate Committee Report,

1970, p. 56).

The topic of leadership has been contemplated since antiquity. According to

Takala (1998), Plato was one of the most influential thinkers on the subject of

leadership, and his ideas and themes continue to be applicable in modern times. He saw

organizations as harmony-seeking entities and leadership as the management of meaning

within those entities. For Plato, leadership was a social process in which effective leaders

possessed certain common attributes. Among these attributes were "charisma and a gift of grace." A modern translation of these words in school settings of today might be the leader's positive and caring presence, trust, respect, and understanding.

The various theories of leadership that have evolved over many years have been grouped into eight major categories. The 'great man" theory proposed that leaders are born, not made, while the "trait theory" suggested that individuals inherit or acquire certain characteristics that make them more suitable as leaders. Proponents of the contingency and situational theories assumed that leadership decisions are based on the environment or situation. Participative leaders use input from constituents in a shared governance approach. Management theory or transactional theory utilizes rewards and punishments, whereas, relationship or transformational leaders motivate and inspire followers toward productivity and success based on the strength of their relationships and trust. Behavior theory holds that leaders are born and that individuals could learn to become leaders through observation and instruction.

Research has been conducted that combined these theories in the development of a comprehensive set of responsibilities, behaviors, laws, or attributes of effective school leadership (Maxwell, 2007; Schmoker, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2002, 2010; Cotton, 2003; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). Cotton and Marzano established statistically significant correlations between principal leadership and student achievement in as many as twenty-six categories or behaviors including the leader's impact on school climate or culture. Covey (2004) identified the need to live, love, learn, and leave a legacy as basic to everyone and suggested that individuals choose their level of investment in an organization based on how they are treated. His 8th Habit is a challenge

to the leader to find his or her voice and inspire others to find theirs. Fullan (2001)

identified five core competencies that positioned the leader as the central figure in a

culture of change and education improvement. These competencies were: 1) moral

purpose, 2) understanding change, 3) relationship building, 4) knowledge creation and

sharing, and 5) coherence making.

The role of principal has become more demanding and complex in the last several

decades particularly since the passing of education reform efforts. In 1983, The National

Commission on Excellence in Education report, *A Nation at Risk,* called for increased

accountability particularly in student achievement on standardized tests and shifted more

regulatory control from districts to state levels. The reforms of *Goals 2000: Educate*

America Act of 1994 and the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 placed even more

accountability pressure on educators, set moving performance targets, and required all

students to be proficient by the year 2014. Although instructional leadership and

supervision lie at the heart of teaching and learning, Kelehear (2008) stated that to expect

one individual to manage both the business and the instructional leadership roles may be

unreasonable without attending to what matters most and reflecting on and responding to

both the craft and the art of leadership.

Similarly, Marzaro et al. (2005) struggled with the notion that any one person

could demonstrate competencies in all of their twenty-one responsibilities of school

leadership. They presented a solution that shifts from individual school leadership to a

leadership team approach and the development and cultivation of the concept of a

purposeful community where leadership and decision-making are shared.

While Collins (2001)agreed that trusting and supportive relationships are ultimately important in organizational success, his research indicated that the most effective leaders were not the extroverted, ego-driven, charismatic types, but rather those who were characterized by "a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (p. 20). Chenoweth (2010) added that effective school leaders were models for students and teachers in a democracy that included tolerance, respect, and high expectations. She insisted that principals must be "relentlessly respectful and respectfully relentless" (p. 18). This unyielding pursuit of respect and success when combined with leaders, teachers, and students working together toward a harmony-seeking entity and lowering stress through positive interaction, appeared to influence a school culture that was conducive to teaching and learning.

The terms school climate and school culture were sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, and they referred to the kind of atmosphere or feeling a school exudes. Educational institutions considered to have a positive culture were characterized typically as safe places where a spirit of genuine care, respect, and collaboration existed among leaders, teachers, and students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1990), school culture was that "intangible feel of a school" that can be sensed when one enters the building (p.3). The culture "reflects the values, beliefs, and traditions of the school community which underlie the relations among students, parents, teachers, and principals" (p.3). Additionally, the principal was identified as the cultural leader who not only managed operations, but one who "acts as a symbol, a potter, a poet, an actor, and a healer in the school environment" (p.3).

Standard #4 of the South Carolina Department of Education Principal Evaluation Instrument stated that the "principal is an educational leader who fosters the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a positive school climate." Kruse and Louis (2010) proposed that creating strong school cultures required intensified leadership and mutual responsibility. They stated that "managing a school's culture is not dependent on the authority that you have based on your position, but can only be affected by increasing your *influence* over behaviors, beliefs, relationships, and other complex dynamics present in the school that are often unpredictable" (p. 9). They identified three features of school cultures that supported other research (Marzano, et al., 2005; Cotton, 2003; and Fullan, 2001) in promoting student and organizational success: professional community, organizational learning, and trust.

The value of trust, particularly the trust of the leader, was of paramount importance to organizational success. In the title of his book, Covey (2006) described trust as the "one thing that changes everything." His work included thirteen behaviors exhibited by the most effective leaders. These behaviors were rooted in character and competence, and these leaders were not only worthy of trust, but they inspired trust in others. The leader's role in fostering trusting relationships, positive organizational cultures, and desired outcomes was well documented (Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Collins, 2001; Maxwell, 2007; Covey, 1989; DePree, 1998).

In addition, the leader who embraced the concepts and strategies of Professional Crisis Management (PCM) had a substantial influence on the school culture through a positive attitude that reinforced appropriate behaviors and performance and even approximations of behaviors and performance. The leader became a voice of inspiration

and high expectation for success. This attitude or aura that the leader exuded was echoed by Maxwell (2006) who said that "attitude isn't everything, but it is the one thing that can make a difference in your life" (p.167) and in the lives of others and amplified by Kouzes & Posner (2010) in their belief that the leader's behaviors can actually "make the world a better place" (p. 14).

PART II: PROBLEM STATEMENT

This research was designed to study the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management. Roberts (2004) defined the problem statement as "the issue that exists in the literature, in theory, or in practice that leads to a need for the study" (p. 120). There was considerable research on the link between principal leadership and school culture and student outcomes. According to Marzano et al. (2005), "the effective leader builds a culture that positively influences teachers, who, in turn, positively influence students" (p.47). Bohanon, Fenning, and Carney (2006) found "some success" with the implementation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS or PBIS) as indicated by a decrease in monthly discipline referrals and fewer students requiring secondary or tertiary support. The researchers held that PBS was important for improving outcomes for teachers and students. Other studies showed similar findings on the effect of positive behavior support (Medley & Little, 2007; Stormont, Smith & Lewis, 2007; McDonald 2010). However, there was little research connecting principal leadership to school culture within the construct of a school-wide implementation of the PCM system.

N. N. Fleisig, author of the PCM system, experienced success in preventing and managing problem behaviors in various settings for nearly three decades. He expressed

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that the relationship between leadership and the implementation of PCM in school settings had not been studied (personal communication, October 14, 2010). Further, he stated that many school districts trained primarily special education teachers rather than implementing a school-wide emphasis to meet the needs of all students. He has long advocated that principal leadership determined the success of PCM and the implications beyond managing problem behaviors. These implications included a positive impact on school culture and the potential to enhance student performance. He referred to brain research that indicated an increase in cognition among students whose physiology was lowered through positive reinforcement and a relaxed and supportive environment. Level I of his Crisis Continuum is called "stable functioning" and is the stage where academic engagement is high and teaching and learning opportunities can be maximized.

These implications for a broader effect on positive school cultures, the increase in on-task behaviors and independent learning, the reduction of problem behaviors and the subsequent increase in the number of instructional minutes, and student performance merited further investigation and research. The relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and PCM is not known. That gap in the research justified the need for this study.

This inquiry showed that school personnel were responsible for managing increasingly frequent aggressive and even crisis behaviors due in part to changing patterns and values in society, higher numbers of students with autism, or children who have been abused, neglected, or traumatized. Without extensive additional training, teachers and staff members were ill-equipped to deal with these behaviors. According to Fleisig (2002), "PCM is the only complete crisis management system available that can

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guarantee successful prevention and intervention with maximum safety, increased

dignity, and total effectiveness" (p. 1.4). While the skills necessary to manage crisis

behaviors are important for today's educators, this study was not focused on those

extreme behaviors but on how positive interactions and reinforcement influence students

on every level of the behavior continuum and promote positive school cultures.

This research provided knowledge of the effectiveness of PCM, a system that

appeared more comprehensive than other positive behavior support programs as it

included both non-physical and physical procedures. Rooted in cognitive behavioral

theory, the system adheres to the following four guiding principles: 1) respect for human

dignity and freedom from pain, 2) freedom of choice, 3) least restrictive alternative, and

4) continuous feedback.

The PCM system has been implemented in very few public schools in South

Carolina and even in these schools there are only a few staff members in each building

that hold practitioner certification. Sporadic implementation of the system and district

decisions to limit training primarily or exclusively to special education teachers indicated

a need for further investigation and training and constituted a void in the literature and

practice. Therefore, there was a need to study this upstate school district that had

invested in training for special education teachers, regular educations teachers, para-

professionals, and administrators and their attempt to develop a school-wide model for

the implementation of PCM

PART III: PURPOSE

This study examined the relationship between principal leadership and school

culture within a school-wide application of PCM. It explored that relationship in one of

the few districts where a school-wide model of PCM has been developed.

As cited above, the relationship between principal leadership and school culture has been studied extensively, and a gap did exist in what was known about the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within the construct of a school-wide implementation of PCM. Because the number of students that exhibit problem and crisis behaviors in public schools was increasing as noted by Fleisig, educators needed additional training to ensure safety, dignity, and effectiveness in all situations and for all students and staff. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of PCM. The school personnel effects of the number of staff that hold PCM certification, the various levels of certification, the number of years of experience with the PCM system, and whether the principal was certified were considered to allow for deeper understanding and to draw richer conclusions regarding the relationships among the components of the study.

PART IV: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For qualitative research, the methodologist, Creswell (2009), advocated a broad central question supported by additional sub-questions. This use of a larger general question helped prevent me from narrowing or limiting the inquiry. The guiding questions allowed me to explore the themes that emerged from the study. The following central question was examined in this study:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

Additional supporting questions were:

1. What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

2. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

3. What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

PART V: SIGNIFICANCE

There was a body of knowledge that connected principal leadership to school culture. Kelley (2005) studied selected dimensions of leadership and measures of school culture in thirty-one elementary schools. He reported that principals were in a position to impact school climate in positive ways particularly when they were open to teachers' perceptions of their leadership. Highly skilled principals, he pointed out, "can develop feelings of trust, open communication, collegiality, and promote effective feedback" all of which were considered important in healthy and positive school cultures (p.5). Horng and Loeb (2010) concluded that "school leaders influence classroom teaching, and consequently student learning, by staffing schools with highly effective teachers and supporting those teachers with effective teaching and learning environments" (p. 69).

Fleisig (2002) created a crisis continuum that described an individual's psychobiological state in all stages of functioning. Level I of the continuum was called "stable functioning" where behavior is on task, thinking is reasonable, feelings are appropriate, and physiology is relaxed. For Fleisig, Level I of the continuum was where the most effective teaching and learning take place.

The results of this research study helped clarify district and school administrators' perceptions and understanding of the influence of PCM on school culture and classroom environments that were conducive to maximizing learning opportunities. The development of a positive school culture that was characterized by respect, dignity, and choice seemed to increase student focus, productivity, and achievement. The findings of this study were the first in South Carolina regarding the relationship of principal leadership and school culture within the construct of a school-wide implementation of PCM.

Further, this study could influence the South Carolina Department of Education and/or other policy-makers to consider a shift from the current Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) model to the state-wide use of the safer and much more comprehensive system of PCM. In either case, this research exposed the value of a system that aligns with educational programs and curricula that is safe, dignified, and effective and one about which most South Carolina administrators are unaware.

PART VI: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Principal leadership has been examined in larger studies using quantitative measures (Cotton, 2003; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). Much can be gleaned from this work especially in applying the identified leadership responsibilities or attributes to school culture, behavior theory, and how administrators and staff members respond to behaviors in public schools.

Qualitative inquiry was rooted in a social constructivist worldview, and according to Creswell, it involved understanding a state of affairs in a context or phenomenon, multiple participant meanings, a social and historical construction, and theory generation

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(2009). The goal of qualitative inquiry is to interact with participants in order to understand their perspectives and to construct meaning from within the human community. The interpretation of the findings is shaped by the experience and background of the researcher and participants.

The conceptual framework for this study included three theories that connected and interacted within the phenomenon. The well-documented role of principal leadership in determining all aspects of school function was closely associated with the importance of school climate or culture on teaching and learning environments and student success. Behavior theory was represented by the PCM and Behavior Tools systems and embodied interactions and interventions that impacted leadership and culture.

B. F. Skinner, Ivan Pavlov, and John Watson were considered to be among the major thinkers in behavior theory. Sometimes called behavioral psychology or behaviorism, behavior theory is a learning construct based on the assumption that all behaviors are acquired by conditioning, specifically the conditioning that occurs through interaction with the environment. Operant conditioning is a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behaviors.

Professional Crisis Management is a systematic approach to crisis management that emerged from two areas of scientific inquiry: applied behavioral analysis and cognitive intervention. From these two disciplines, Fleisig (2002) developed a cognitive-behavioral model that focuses on making systematic changes in the way a person thinks and behaves. The system was not designed to take the place of institutional programs but to attach to treatment plans and curricula utilized in in-patient/out-patient facilities,

regular education classrooms, classrooms for exceptional students, treatment centers, and vocational programs.

As a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Fleisig incorporated behavior theory in the PCM system, and practitioners use the theory as they provide positive reinforcement to students for appropriate behaviors and approximations of target behaviors. These prevention and intervention strategies help minimize pre-crisis and crisis behaviors and maximize positive, productive, and stable behaviors.

While designed primarily to assist individuals in crisis situations, much of the system is comprised of non-physical interventions in the form of crisis prevention strategies and positive reinforcement. These positive reinforcements and prevention strategies were relevant for teacher/student interactions that led to an increase in on-task behaviors and the development of classroom and school-wide environments that promoted engagement and learning. In addition, all physical and non-physical PCM strategies were grounded in the theoretical framework and ethical principles of safety, choice, basic human dignity, and behavior analysis.

This study proposed that principal leadership and the implementation of PCM influenced school culture. As shown in Figure 1.1, the one-directional arrow illustrated this relationship.

Figure 1.1: Principal Leadership, PCM Implementation, and School Culture

PART VII: METHODOLOGY

To examine the influence of principal leadership within a PCM framework, I positioned myself in the phenomenon and attempted to understand the issue from the viewpoint of the participants. A qualitative case study method was employed for this study. Grounded in a social constructivist worldview, the goal of qualitative inquiry is to interact with participants in order to understand their perspectives and to construct meaning from within the human community. It should be noted here that the interpretation of the findings is always shaped by the experience and background of the researcher.

Inquiring from a central question and incorporating an inductive style, I collected, coded, and analyzed data from three schools in an Upstate South Carolina district. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and focus groups and were analyzed for emerging meaning, themes, and/or patterns. This qualitative approach allowed the participants to become involved in the data collection/analysis and to contribute to the researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the findings.

PART VIII: DELIMITATIONS

This study was limited to one school district in South Carolina. The district was selected because its school leaders and staff members were developing and implementing a school-wide-model for aligning PCM strategies and procedures with the curriculum. While the prevention and intervention strategies of PCM have been found to be effective with individuals from pre-school age to adults in schools, hospitals, and treatment centers, this research was limited to two elementary schools and one middle school.

PART IX: LIMITATIONS

Variables outside the parameters of this study that limit it were:

1. Sample size was limited due to the number of principals and teachers who met the selection criteria.

2. The study was dependent on the informants' authentic and honest responses to interview questions.

3. The study was limited to the participant's interpretation or perceptions of school culture, principal leadership, and the effectiveness of PCM strategies.

4. Possible hesitancy from principals to allow interviews and observations within their buildings and a potential unwillingness to seek feedback on their leadership behaviors.

PART X: DEFINIITIONS OF PCM TERMS

Continuous aggression: Repeated demonstrations of behaviors that are potentially injurious to others. Examples include continuous hitting, biting, kicking, head butting, or use of any other part of the body or an object to injure another person.

Continuous high magnitude disruption: Repeated demonstration of behaviors that are potentially damaging to the environment. Examples include throwing or toppling heavy objects such as chairs, tables, fire extinguishers, etc. Pencil tapping, paper throwing, book dropping, food throwing, etc., are not examples of high magnitude disruption. Similarly, damage to property does not constitute high magnitude disruptive behavior.

Continuous self-injury: Repeated demonstrations of behaviors that are potentially injurious to oneself. Examples include head banging, face slapping, eye poking, etc.

Crisis: Continuous aggression, and/or continuous self-injury, and/or continuous high-magnitude disruption. Individually, these can be referred to as crisis behaviors.

Extinction: Planned or spontaneous ignoring of junk behavior.

Fade: Systematically removing prompts in order to promote independent responding.

Junk Behavior: Behavior that is annoying but not harmful or illegal that is typically ignored.

Operant Conditioning: The process whereby behaviors are increased or decreased by means of systematically reinforcing approximations of a target behavior.

*Pivot***:** Using another individual's correct responding as a model for the individual engaged in inappropriate behavior with the idea that direct interactions are avoided, removing the possibility of reinforcing the individual's inappropriate behaviors.

Physiology: Refers to heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, etc. As an individual comes under stressful or demanding circumstances, these physiological components increase. Physiological functions enable and fuel behavior.

Pre-crisis behaviors: The second level of the crisis continuum that includes off-task behaviors, unreasonable thinking, inappropriate feelings, and heightened physiology.

Professional Crisis Management: A comprehensive and fully integrated system of procedures designed to 1) prevent crisis situations and de-escalate pre-crisis behaviors, 2) contain and decrease aggressive, disruptive, and self-injurious behaviors, 3) provide staff with a range of personal safety techniques, 4) transport individuals and reintegrate them into existing treatment and academic settings, and 5) conduct post-crisis intervention and analysis.

Professional Crisis Management Association (PCMA): A private consulting organization that specializes in Applied Behavior Analysis. PCMA certifies practitioners and instructors in Professional Crisis Management.

Reinforcement: Environmental events that follow a response and increase the probability that the response will occur again in future behavior.

Shaping: Repeated reinforcements of small improvements or steps toward a new or different behavior.

Stable Functioning: The first level of the crisis continuum with the following characteristics – behavior is on-task, thinking is reasonable, feelings are appropriate, and physiology in relaxed.

Target behaviors: the specific behavior that has been chosen to be increased, decreased, or maintained.

PART XI: SUMMARY

Changing patterns and values in society and larger numbers of students entering today's public schools who are autistic, abused, neglected, or traumatized broaden the complexity and responsibility of principal leadership. Without extensive additional training, principals and teachers were ill-prepared to accommodate the needs of these students in a safe and dignified manner. The influence of principal leadership on the effectiveness of schools to meet individual student needs and to stimulate the creation of positive school culture has been documented.

However, responding safely and respectfully to children who exhibited crisis behaviors using the PCM system was an increasingly necessary function of schools for which little to no research has been conducted in South Carolina. This study was

designed to examine the relationship between principal leadership and school climate within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management.

Chapter II contains a review of the literature on the relationship between principal leadership and school culture and the effectiveness of positive reinforcement. Chapter III includes the design of the study, the qualitative methodology, a description of the setting and participants, data collection, and data analysis. The data, results, conclusions, and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapters IV and V.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Providing equitable, high quality education for every child is the goal of public education. This objective is impossible to meet without an abundance of exceptional and committed professional educators. However, even the most effective teachers struggle to provide quality learning experiences in environments that are stressful, unsafe, or lack adequate administrative support. The teaching and learning process is even more complicated in today's society as school personnel are responsible for managing aggressive and even crisis behaviors due in part to changing patterns and values in society, higher numbers of students with autism, or children who have been abused, neglected, or traumatized. Further, the current economic crisis that began in 2007 and methods of funding public education in South Carolina have caused increased class size, a reduction in the number of support staff, and have required personnel to assume additional roles that are beyond the scope of their original job descriptions.

The role of principal has become more demanding and complex in the last several decades particularly since the passing of federal education reform legislation. In 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education report, *A Nation at Risk,* called for increased accountability particularly in student achievement on standardized tests and shifted more regulatory control from districts to state levels. The reforms of *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* of 1994 and the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 placed even more

stringent accountability pressure on educators, set moving performance targets, and required all students to score at the proficient level on state tests by the year 2014.

While these efforts toward school reform may have been well intended, they were politically motivated top-down mandates. Policy makers have attempted to improve the quality of education through an outside-in approach with little regard for how educators might enhance the school culture to maximize learning opportunities for children. According to Deal and Peterson (2008), "too much emphasis has been given to reforming schools from the outside through policies and mandates…and too little attention has been paid to how schools can be shaped from within" (p. vii). They suggested that nurturing the school culture was the key to improving education and that principal leadership was the primary influence in creating positive, caring, and intellectually stimulating schools that improved academic performance.

This review of the literature was presented to inform educators and policy makers of the influence of principal leadership on school culture to improve student social and academic success. The aim of this chapter was to critically review current research to provide some evidence that answered the following questions:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school

culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

Additional supporting questions were:

1. What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

2. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

3. What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

PART II: DEFINITIONS

The terms school climate and school culture were sometimes used interchangeably, and they referred to the kind of atmosphere or feeling a school exudes. The two words carry similar meanings. Climate, according to Merriam-Webster, refers to the "influences or environmental conditions characterizing a group or period." Climate carries the notion of atmosphere or external factors and is an apt descriptor of learning environments. The term culture prevailed in the literature for its deeper meaning and implications to the educational setting, particularly for its link to human values and behaviors. Again to Merriam-Webster, culture is the "intellectual and moral faculties" required for education settings, "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations", and "the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution or organization."

As stated in Chapter One, the principal is the central figure in shaping school culture. The principal sets the tone of the school and gives direction and impetus toward what is most important for teaching and learning. Positive school cultures, as described by Deal and Peterson (2009), have leadership "emanating from many people … and (principals) who can cope with the paradoxes of their work and take advantage of opportunities for the future" (p. ix).

Educational institutions considered to have a positive culture were characterized typically as safe and happy places where a spirit of genuine care, respect, and

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collaboration existed among leaders, teachers, and students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1990), a statement taken from the work of Deal and Peterson (1990) posited culture as the "intangible feel of a school" that can be sensed when one enters the building. The culture "reflects the values, beliefs, and traditions of the school community, which underlie the relations among students, parents, teachers, and principals" (p. 3). Additionally, the principal was identified as the cultural leader who not only manages operations, but one who "acts as a symbol, a potter, a poet, an actor, and a healer in the school environment" (p. 3).

Barth, (2002) defined culture as "a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization. It is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (p.6).
The antithesis of positive school culture was described by Deal and Peterson (1998) as "toxic" where staffs are extremely fragmented, where the purpose of serving students has been lost to the goal of serving the adults, where negative values and hopelessness reign" (p.28).

The convergence of these definitions illustrated that culture is about how individuals make meaning within a setting. This meaning-making is conducted through shared values, norms, rituals, stories, traditions, celebrations, recognitions, and the formulation of specific language that shape beliefs and behaviors. Like the potter shapes the clay into a beautiful vessel, the school leader is identified as the most influential figure in the shaping of a culture that is conducive to learning. In this review an attempt

was made to describe and synthesize the role and behaviors of the principal and the characteristics of a positive school culture.

PART III: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The reform efforts in the past three decades have been focused on restructuring, standards, and high-stakes standardized testing. These reform approaches fall within Bolman and Deal's (2003) structural frame, one of four frames or lenses through which to view and understand the world. Their structural frame emphases goals, efficiency, production, results, and policy to bring about change and has been the prevailing ideology of an outside-in approach to school reform. Their symbolic frame, on the other hand, addresses the needs of people and the importance of a caring, trusting environment. Attention to people and environments affords educators opportunities to improve schooling from the inside-out by shaping the school culture. The conceptual framework for this review was derived from this symbolic disposition and culture theory.

Culture theory recognizes how individuals influence each other when they interact and experience the dynamics of that association. This interactivity shapes a person's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of reality. O'Reilly and Chapman (1996) described culture as the shared values and norms that define accepted behaviors and the feelings of the members. Cultures develop their own language, perceptions, rituals, norms, values, and feel (or climate).

The roots of our understanding of culture lie with Mayo (1920's). He concluded from his study at Western Electric in Hawthorne, Illinois, that the elements of culture, specifically human attitudes and perceptions, were more influential on organizational behavior than external factors. Barnard (1938) and Selznick (1949) made substantial

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contributions to the theory as well.

Culture behavior serves the functions of controlling aggression, distributing power, defining norms and values, and encouraging and facilitating coordinated behaviors. According the Marion (2002), "culture is influenced by the totality of the organizational experience" including matters as simple as the layout of the facility or how a school day is organized into periods that define and maximize instructional minutes (p. 227). Sergiovanni (1992) added that to separate leadership from culture may create positive feelings in an organization but does little to change what matters most such as relationships, teaching and learning, and diversity. Marion (2002) concurred that "culture is people and processes and tools, and cultural leaders must tend the total creature" (p.228).

PART IV: SCOPE

The essential questions addressed in this study centered on the characteristics of school cultures and the principal behaviors and attitudes that shaped those cultures. Because so much about leadership and culture takes place in the affective domain, the type of literature on the subject tended to be theoretical in nature. Scholarly journal articles, books, and government documents in the disciplines of leadership and education were included in this review. The purpose of this chapter was to convey a synthesis of what is known on the topic of the influence of principal leadership and school culture on social and academic growth and development.

PART V: FINDINGS

The goal of the public school is to provide equitable, high quality educational opportunities for every child. Attempts at improving or reforming public education have

been politically motivated and ineffective. For, example, the theory undergirding the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 spoke directly to providing a quality education for every child. But the mandate's top-down, outside-in approach of setting moving performance targets that are beyond the reach of most schools rendered it a failure from the outset. Improving educational opportunities requires the removal of some of the pressures of decrees from Washington and a focus on what matters most, the relationships and daily interactions of teachers and students. As Tyack & Cuban (1995) stated, "We favor attempts to bring about such improvements by working from the inside out, especially by enlisting the support and skills of teachers as key actors in reform" (p.10).

Improving teaching and learning requires a school culture that is safe, positive, and conducive to developing a lifestyle of continuous growth. There was consensus in the literature suggesting that developing and nurturing the school culture was the key to improving education and that principal leadership was the primary influence in creating positive, caring, and intellectually stimulating schools that improved academic performance (Louis, & Wahlstrom, 2011; Deal & Peterson, 2008; Fullan, 2002; and Barth, 2002).

Delivering equity and excellence in educational opportunities for every learner requires principal leadership, effective teachers, and an inside-out approach to developing and nurturing a positive school culture that promotes social and academic success. School cultures include the set of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, norms, and behaviors that shape the learning environment.

The first question addressed in this review was: What are the characteristics of positive school cultures? From a broad perspective, Louis & Wahlstrom (2011)

suggested positive school cultures that promoted academic success were characterized by excellent instruction, shared norms and values, and trust. Their interviews of 8000 principals and teachers in 164 schools in 9 states showed administrators and teachers engaged in deep organizational learning by examining what they already knew and through their own action research to discover emerging knowledge. Teachers were able to illicit high levels of achievement in cultures where the norms and values included shared leadership. High levels of trust in the culture gave teachers a voice and the confidence to provide the solid foundation for adult and student learning. Louis & Wahlstrom concluded that "changes in the school culture affect the way in which adults in and out of the school work with each other to improve practices and create the best learning environments for children" (p. 56).

Vatthauer (2008), Education Consultant/AYP Coordinator of the Northwest Service Cooperative, explained that when it came to accountability and measuring student performance, culture was often the least utilized tool for improving achievement. She advocated that school culture was the crucial element in accountability and school success. She continued, "… without a culture that supports and recognizes the importance of learning goals, change and improvements just won't happen" (p.1). Vatthauer correlated positive school cultures with increased student motivation and achievement as well as teacher attitudes, satisfaction, and productivity. She characterized positive school cultures as having a shared purpose and norms, a personal responsibility for all learners, collaborative relationships, and the sharing of professional knowledge and practice.

The extensive work of Deal & Peterson (2008) supported school culture as the

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often overlooked factor that can improve student achievement. They concurred with Vatthauer that a shared sense of purpose was central to a strong, positive culture. They described staff members as teaching and working from their hearts and collaborating with colleagues. They emphasized rituals, celebrations, and recognitions as important in supporting achievement and innovations. They painted a picture of a joyful environment that was full of success, stories, humor, honor, and history. In settings like these, stress levels were lowered, and teachers and students were free to focus on teaching and learning.

The second question addressed in this review was: What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence school cultures? Stating that the principal's instructional leadership was a first step toward improving achievement, Fullan (2002) offered that we needed a "fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of our schools" (p.16). To assist in this transformation, he developed a framework comprised of five components of leadership: 1) moral purpose, 2) understanding the change process, 3) improving relationships, 4) knowledge creation and sharing, and 5) coherence making. He claimed that sustaining a culture that promotes academic achievement requires more than strong principal leadership. It was imperative that the principal develop strong teacher leaders and a broad base of other leadership at many levels. For Fullan, continuous school improvement was dependent on a principal who, along with the help of other leaders, fostered and nurtured a strong and positive culture of learning.

Marzano, Walters, & McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 69 studies, interviewed 650 principals, and discovered 21 leadership responsibilities that have a statistically significant effect on student achievement. Their research indicated that the

principal's attention to and the development of these responsibilities contributed directly to academic achievement. The responsibilities range from *relationships* with a correlation of .18 to *situational awareness* with a correlation of .33. It is noteworthy that these 21 responsibilities were very close in size, in fact, 95 percent of them (20 out of 21) fell within the values of .18 and .28. The researchers showed that increasing a principal's effectiveness in any of these responsibilities produced an increase in percentile growth in achievement.

While Marzano et.al. (2005) found a direct correlation between principal behavior and student achievement, Cotton (2003) suggested that the principal did not affect performance directly. However, she asserted that her 26 identified leadership traits and behaviors had a profound and positive influence on student learning. A few of the behaviors included vision, high expectations for learning, self-confidence, responsibility, perseverance, visibility and accessibility, and nurturing a positive and supportive school climate. Further, she pointed out that it was rare to find a high achieving school whose principal did not possess most if not all of these traits and behaviors. Cotton concurred that, while the principal was the key to improving achievement, he or she must develop strong teacher leaders as well.

The most revealing principal behaviors and actions that influenced student achievement were developed by Deal & Peterson (2009). They specified eight essential roles that shaped a positive school culture. These roles and their brief descriptions were:

Historian: seeks to understand the social and normative past of the school

 Anthropological sleuth: utilizes and probes for the current array of cultural traditions,

 values, and beliefs

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Visionary: works with others, including leaders in the neighboring community, to

characterize a portrait of the ideal school

Icon: affirms values through dress, behavior, attention, actions, and routines

Potter: shapes and is shaped by the school's symbolic webbing of heroes, rituals,

traditions, ceremonies, symbols; brings in staff who share core values

Poet: uses expressive language to reinforce values and sustains the school's best image

of itself

Actor: improvises in the school's predictable dramas, comedies, and tragedies

Healer: oversees transitions and changes; heals the wounds of conflict and loss

Kouzes & Posner (2010) strengthened their thirty years of international research

in recent years. They discovered that while the context of leadership had changed

dramatically due to terrorism, global economy, increased diversity, and digital

information and communication, the content of leadership had remained the same. They

inquired about the qualities people looked for and admired in leaders they would be most

likely to follow and proposed ten truths about leadership: 1) you make a difference, 2)

credibility is the foundation of leadership, 3) values drive commitment, 4) focusing on

the future sets leaders apart, 5) you can't do it alone, 6) trust rules, 7) challenge is the

crucible for greatness, 8) you either lead by example or you don't lead at all, 9) the best

leaders are the best learners, and 10) leadership is an affair of the heart.

Principals who effectively shape a positive school culture that maximizes learning

and growth for all adults and students find many ways to articulate core values that are

reflected in teacher behaviors and actions. School leaders, particularly the school

principal, have opportunities at every moment to shape a positive or negative school

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culture through their actions and values. When core values determine attitudes, words, and behaviors, the "intangible feel" or spirit of the school can become one of safety, nurture, and support for social and academic growth.

PART VI: CONCUSIONS

This literature review provided a brief synthesis of the research on the influence of principal leadership and school culture on academic achievement. The research indicated that principal leadership can shape school culture in positive ways to improve student achievement. The leader's values, beliefs, behaviors, and roles as models, poets, actors, and healers help create and sustain a positive school culture. In this safe, nurturing, and supportive environment, teachers and students are free to focus not only on the preparations necessary to excel on state and federal assessments, but on becoming continuous learners in a complex society.

Top-down federal and state mandates for school reform have been ineffective in providing equitable and excellent educational opportunities for every student. An inside-out approach of principal leadership that shapes the school culture for academic achievement as the key to school reform has been overlooked. Careful attention to the symbols, norms, behaviors, and values of a positive school culture has been shown to improve student performance.

The goal of providing equitable and excellent educational opportunities for all students can be reached by educational leaders creating positive and safe school cultures of continuous learning. Barth (2002) summed up the matter stating, "Show me a school where instructional leaders constantly examine the school's culture and work to transform it into one hospitable to sustained human learning, and I'll show you students

who do just fine on those standardized tests" (p. 10).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODODLGY

PART I: PROBLEM STATEMENT

Providing equitable, high quality education for every child is the goal of public

education. This objective is impossible to meet without an abundance of exceptional and

committed teachers. However, even the most effective teachers struggle to provide

quality learning experiences in environments that are stressful, unsafe, or lack adequate

administrative support. As Fleisig (2002) explained:

> During the last quarter century, a dramatic rise in aggressive and highly disruptive
>
> behavior has been noted in our society. This increase has been reflected not only
>
> in families but also in the institutions that serve the public, such as schools,
>
> hospitals and health care organizations. In most cases, these organizations have
>
> been unprepared to address these issues (p. 4).

 Without extensive additional training, school administrators, teachers, and staff members

are ill-equipped to respond to students who exhibit these aggressive and highly disruptive

behaviors.

Historically, school districts in South Carolina have used a crisis management

system from the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) called Non-Violent Crisis Intervention

adopted by the South Carolina Department of Education. CPI was developed in the

1970's for health services professionals with its background in the fields of kinetics,

physiology, and communications. It was designed to provide a holistic system for

diffusing escalating behaviors. The South Carolina Department of Education officials elected to use the CPI model for crisis management and to train primarily special education teachers.

I was certified in CPI more than twenty years ago in a time, at least in my experience, when episodes of crisis behaviors were extremely rare if they existed at all. In fact, most educators associated the words *crisis management* with school safety plans, i.e. fire evacuation procedures, security systems, and emergency protocols. The closest approximation to true crisis behaviors was when students were fighting, and usually when adults stepped between them the behaviors became non-continuous.

This study was not about school safety plans or emergency procedures, although the ability to manage crisis behaviors is a safety issue. As stated in Chapter One, educators are responsible for managing behaviors of increasing numbers of students with autism or who have been abused are traumatized. The behaviors demonstrated by some of these students fit the definition of crisis behaviors, and without additional and specific training in behavior management, administrators and teachers are ill-equipped to deal with continuous aggression, self-injury, or high-magnitude disruption.

I noticed the onset of these crisis behaviors ten years ago and have been witness to and responsible for students who exhibit these behaviors since that time. My records indicated that at least one student and often two or three students demonstrated crisis behaviors in every semester since the onset was observed. It is ironic that for many years prior to that ten year time period, I had little need for my CPI certification. When the true crisis behaviors began, I realized immediately that I was inadequately prepared to manage them. PCM provided the necessary skills and strategies for prevention and

intervention for crisis behaviors that occur in today's society. It should be noted here, however, that the primary focus of this study was not about managing crisis behaviors but about the use of behavior theory and PCM strategies to prevent escalation and problem behaviors and maximize stable functioning for all students.

Fleisig (2002), a board certified behavioral analyst, developed the less frequently used but more comprehensive program of Professional Crisis Management (PCM) in 1984 and defined it as a complete and fully integrated system designed to manage crisis situations effectively, safely, and with dignity. His system was based on four primary strategies 1) crisis prevention: the promotion of positive feelings, productive behaviors, rational thinking and relaxed physiology, 2) crisis de-escalation: the management of non-continuous behaviors that are disruptive, aggressive, or self-injurious, 3) crisis intervention: the physical management (personal safety, transportation and immobilization) of continuous behaviors that are disruptive, aggressive, or self-injurious, and 4) post-crisis strategies: the reintegration of the individual into the existing teaching system. Fleisig specified that the system was derived from "scientifically verified principles in behavioral psychology for the prevention or reduction of maladaptive behavior (p. 4).

PCM has been implemented school-wide in an elementary school in an upstate South Carolina district for over five years. The sparse use of PCM in South Carolina schools has exposed a rare phenomenon that exists in this upstate district that has not been studied. Therefore, I conducted an investigation of the nature of the relationship between the role of principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management.

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Leadership, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is the "position or office of the leader, the capacity to lead, or the act of leading." Kouzes and Posner (2002) submitted that leadership included modeling, inspiring, challenging, enabling, and encouraging. DePree (1989) added that leadership was an art that involves "liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way" (p. 1). Kelehear (2008) concurred that "instructional leadership is about being wholly present in the moment and the experience, and then being able to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge that experience" (p. xv). For the purposes of this paper, principal leadership was defined as the capacity to model the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that shape cultures that optimize growth and development for all learners.

School culture, as established by Deal and Peterson (1990), was the "intangible feel of a school" that can be sensed when one enters the building. The culture "reflects the values, beliefs, and traditions of the school community, which underlie the relations among students, parents, teachers and principals" (p. 3). Importantly, the principal was identified as the cultural leader who not only managed operations, but one who acted as a symbol, a potter, a poet, an actor, and a healer in the school environment.

PART II: PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management from the perspective of participants at two elementary schools and one middle school in the upstate of South Carolina. I examined the relationship between principal leadership and school culture in settings where the leader and staff executed consistently the behavior theories and strategies contained in the

Professional Crisis Management system. As intellectual goals, I constructed meaning through interactions with participants and enriched my insight and understanding of the role of principal leadership and school culture. Further, I examined how principal leadership and PCM shape school cultures.

PART III: TYPE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Working from the epistemological stance of a constructivist worldview, I conducted a case study to investigate the phenomenon of principal leadership and school culture within the implementation of PCM. Case study research explores people, phenomena, organizations, and programs and usually involves interviews and observations. Marshall & Rossman (2011) stated that "case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats" (p. 267). The case study approach was appropriate for this research endeavor as it enriched my understanding of the lived experiences of participants within the context of their own school setting. This type of study accommodated the interpretation of multiple participant meanings within the setting and allowed me to construct theory to describe the phenomenon.

The following central question was used to guide this study:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

Additional supporting questions were:

1. What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

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2. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

3. What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

PART IV: SIGNIFICANCE

This study was significant to the field of education as it examined the impact of principal leadership in shaping school culture. The influence of principal leadership on school culture as paramount to student achievement has been documented (Marzano et al., 2005; Cotton, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 2009). Principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of PCM constituted a rare phenomenon that merited investigation due to the afore-mentioned increase in pre-crisis and crisis behaviors. Given what is known about principal leadership and school culture, further investigation of the influence of the PCM system as a school-wide construct contributed to the literature.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

PART I: SITUATED KNOWLEDGE AND RELATED ASSUMPTIONS

I have eighteen years of experience as a school administrator and have held a CPI certification for twenty years. After acquiring PCM Level II Practitioner certification six years ago, I set a goal to seek instructor status in the system in order to train the entire staff at my school. During my years as an athletic coach, I reflected on my influence on players and how the shaping of values and attitudes impacted their behaviors, performance, and the overall success of the team. Many years later I still consider coaching to be a primary function of an administrator and have pursued my interest in the

leader's role in shaping school cultures into positive learning environments. I have continued my efforts to increase my own personal and professional capacity as a Ph. D. candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies at the University of South Carolina.

I operated under the assumption that the leader's influence is powerful and that it may be expressed in positive or negative ways. The effective leader is ever mindful to model the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that align with the goals and purposes of the organization. I believe positive school cultures may be described as safe, respectful, and caring places that optimize opportunities for success and are continuously shaped by the influence of leaders, teachers, students, and community members. My history and experience with leadership, culture, and the use of behavior theory as prescribed in the PCM system informed this study. I was aware, however, that my subjectivity constituted a lens that could bias what I observed.

PART II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature surrounding principal leadership and school culture was reviewed for this study. These two bodies of work represented the major considerations of this research project and undergirded the central question of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management. Understanding what was already known regarding the connections between principal leadership and school culture guided the research and provided the foundation for understanding their relationship within a context that had not been studied.

Principal Leadership: The topic of leadership has been contemplated since antiquity. According to Takala (1998), Plato was one of the most influential early thinkers on the subject of leadership, and his ideas and themes continue to be applicable in modern times. He saw organizations as harmony-seeking entities and leadership as the management of meaning within those entities. For Plato, leadership was a social process in which effective leaders possessed certain common attributes. Among these attributes were "charisma and a gift of grace" (p. 795). A translation of these words in school settings of today might be the leader's positive and caring presence, trust, respect, and understanding.

Theories of leadership have evolved over the years and fall within a spectrum that ranges from an autocratic perspective to a democratic style. Marzano, Walters, & McNulty (2005) reviewed the various leadership theories and grouped them into eight major categories. The 'great man" theory proposes that leaders are born, not made, while the "trait theory" suggests that individuals inherit or acquire certain characteristics that make them more suitable as leaders. Proponents of the contingency and situational theories assume that leadership decisions are based on the environment or situation. Participative leaders use input from constituents in a shared governance approach. Management theory or transactional theory utilizes rewards and punishments, whereas, relational or transformational leaders motivate and inspire followers toward productivity and success based on the strength of their relationships and trust. Behavior theory states that leaders are born and that individuals can learn to become leaders through observation and instruction.

Researchers have combined these theories in the development of comprehensive sets of responsibilities, behaviors, laws, or attributes of effective school leadership (Maxwell, 2007; Schmoker, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Cotton, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005). Cotton and Marzano established statistically significant correlations between principal leadership and student achievement in as many as twenty-six categories or behaviors including the leader's impact on school climate or culture. Covey (2004) identified the need to live, love, learn, and leave a legacy as basic to everyone and suggested that individuals choose their level of investment in an organization based in proportion to how they are treated in the workplace. His 8th Habit is a challenge for the leader to find his or her voice and inspire others to find theirs. Fullan (2001) identified five core competencies that position the leader as the central figure in a culture of change and education improvement. These competencies are: 1) moral purpose, 2) understanding change, 3) relationship building, 4) knowledge creation and sharing and, 5) coherence making.

The role of principal has become more demanding and complex in the last several decades particularly since the passing of education reform legislation. In 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education report, *A Nation at Risk,* called for increased accountability particularly in student achievement on standardized tests and shifted more regulatory control from districts to state levels. The reforms of *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* of 1994 and the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 placed even more accountability pressure on educators, set moving performance targets, and required all students to perform at the proficient level by the year 2014. Although instructional leadership and supervision lie at the heart of teaching and learning, Kelehear (2008)

argued that it might be unreasonable to expect one person to be able to conduct meaningful instructional supervision while attending to all the management necessary for school operations.

Similarly, Marzaro et al., (2005) struggled with the notion that any one person could demonstrate competencies in all of their twenty-one responsibilities of school leadership. They presented a solution that shifts from individual school leadership to a leadership team and the development and cultivation of the concept of a *purposeful community* where leadership and decision-making are shared.

While Collins (2001) agreed that trusting and supportive relationships are ultimately important in organizational success, his research indicated that the most effective leaders were not the extroverted, ego-driven, charismatic types, but rather those who were characterized by "a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (p. 20). Chenoweth (2010) added that effective school leaders were models for students and teachers in a democracy that includes tolerance, respect, and high expectations. She insisted that principals must be "relentlessly respectful and respectfully relentless" (p. 18). This unwavering pursuit of respect and success when combined with leaders, teachers, and students working together toward a harmony-seeking entity and lowering stress through positive interaction, helps create a school culture that is conducive to teaching and learning.

School Culture: The terms school climate and school culture were sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, and they referred to the kind of atmosphere or feeling a school exudes. The two words carry similar meanings. Climate, according to Merriam-Webster, refers to the "influences or environmental conditions characterizing a

group or period." Climate carries the notion of atmosphere or external factors and is an apt descriptor of learning environments.

However, the term culture prevailed in the literature for its deeper meaning and implications for the educational setting, particularly for its link to human values and behaviors. Again to Merriam-Webster, culture is the "intellectual and moral faculties" required for education settings, "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations" and "the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution or organization."

Educational institutions considered to have a positive culture were described typically as safe and happy places where a spirit of genuine care, respect, and collaboration exists among leaders, teachers, and students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1990), a statement taken from the work of Deal and Peterson posited culture as the "intangible feel of a school" that can be sensed when one enters the building. The culture "reflects the values, beliefs, and traditions of the school community, which underlie the relations among students, parents, teachers and principals" (p.3). Additionally, the principal was identified as the cultural leader who not only manages operations, but one who "acts as a symbol, a potter, a poet, an actor and a healer in the school environment" (p. 3). Barth, (2002) defined culture as a "complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization. It is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (p. 6).

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The convergence of these definitions illustrated that culture is about how individuals make meaning within a setting. This meaning-making is conducted through shared values, norms, rituals, stories, traditions, celebrations, recognitions, and the formulation of specific language that shapes beliefs and behaviors. Like the potter forms the clay into a beautiful vessel, the school leader was identified as the most influential figure in the shaping of a culture that is conducive to learning.

This brief review of the literature illustrated some key points. All organizations have cultures that are characterized by beliefs, norms, rituals, attitudes, myths, stories, and behaviors that are constantly interacting to shape the environment. Positive cultures have been identified as contributors to effective schools and student academic success (Marzano et al., 2005; Cotton, 2003; Deal & Peterson, 2009). Through modeling certain attitudes and behaviors, participating in the rituals, and the telling of stories that reflect the values and norms of an organization, the principal, explained Deal and Peterson, becomes the *cultural leader* with the most potential to shape the learning environment (2009).

While the aforementioned reform efforts such as Goals 2000 and No Child Left Behind may have been well intended, they were politically motivated top-down mandates. Policy makers have attempted to improve the quality of education through an outside-in approach with little regard for how educators might enhance the school culture to maximize learning opportunities for children. As stated by Deal and Peterson (2009), "too much emphasis has been given to reforming schools from the outside through policies and mandates … and too little attention has been paid to how schools can be shaped from within" (p. vii). They suggested that nurturing the school culture was the

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key to improving education and that principal leadership was the primary influence in creating positive, caring, and intellectually stimulating schools that improve academic performance.

This study continued my quest for a deeper, more informed understanding of the influence of principal leadership and school culture. Furthermore, a study of the two components of principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of PCM has not been conducted. The data collected in this project contributed to the body of knowledge that may influence policy makers to consider an alternative to the state model for crisis management.

PART III: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for this study included leadership theory and culture theory and how the two connected and informed my approach to understanding the phenomenon. Two of the eight major leadership theories that were applied here were the participative leader who uses input from constituents in a shared governance approach and the transformational leader who motivates and inspires followers toward productivity and success based on the strength of relationships and trust. While the other traits were valuable in broadening my understanding of principal leadership, these two were selected because they aligned with the positive reinforcement and preventions strategies of PCM.

Culture theory recognizes how individuals influence each other when they interact and experience the dynamics of those associations. This interactivity shapes a person's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of reality. O'Reilly and Chapman (1996) described culture as the shared values and norms that define accepted behaviors and the feelings of the members. Cultures develop their own language, perceptions, rituals,

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norms, values and feel (or climate). As suggested by Marion (2002), "culture is influenced by the totality of the organizational experience" including matters as simple as the layout of the facility or how a school day is organized into periods that define and maximize instructional minutes. He continued that "culture is people and processes and tools, and cultural leaders must tend the total creature" (p. 227). These notions of people, beliefs, values, norms, and rituals fit under a larger umbrella that Bolman and Deal (2008) called the symbolic frame where "culture, symbols, and spirit are keys to organizational success" (p.16). They proposed that "culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise accomplish desired ends" (p. 253).

The interaction of leadership theory and culture theory informed my understanding and interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants as teachers described their relationship with the principal, their confidence in her support, and being allowed and expected to make decisions regarding student behavior. The co-constructed meaning with teachers regarding the value of trusting relationships with the principal and their confidence that results from her support were applied to the central research question of this study: What is the nature of the relationship between the role of principal leadership and school culture in a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

<div align="center">STUDY DESIGN</div>

PART I: METHODOGICAL APPROACH

I conducted a case study to investigate the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within the implementation of PCM. The case

study approach was appropriate as it enriched my understanding of the lived experiences

of participants within the context of their own school settings. According to Creswell

(2009), qualitative inquiry is rooted in a social constructivist worldview, and it involves

understanding a state of affairs in a context or phenomenon, multiple participant

meanings, a social and historical construction, and theory generation. The

epistemological stance for this study was the social constructivist worldview. I attempted

to understand the lived experiences of the participants within their contexts, interpret

multiple participant meanings, and construct theory to describe the relationship between

principal leadership and school culture within the implementation of Professional Crisis

Management.

PART II: CONTEXTS

I selected two elementary schools and one middle school in an upstate South

Carolina Title I district of six thousand students. The elementary schools were Pre-K

through 5th grade and had enrollments of approximately six hundred and fifty students.

The middle school housed four hundred students in grades 6 through 8. A behavior

interventionist served all schools in the district. The poverty index for the district was 74

percent.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study included the principal and three teachers from each

of the schools and one district behavior interventionist (N=13). On the one hand,

selecting research sites from my own district may be considered convenience sampling.

On the other, this district was the only one in South Carolina where the phenomenon

existed. A criterion sampling technique was used to select the specific participants as

they all held PCM Practitioner II certifications or Behavior Tools Practitioner or

Instructor status and worked in a district that had committed to training a broad base of

employees in behavior theory in all schools.

PART IV: METHODS

Interview. Interviewing was selected as a data collection method in order to learn

from the lived experiences of the participants and to explore their knowledge and

interpretations of those experiences. The interview provided opportunity for the

participants to use rich, descriptive language that facilitated the depth of my

understanding and interpretation. I recorded the interviews on a digital device and

through hand written notes in my field journal.

Observation. In qualitative research, the inquirer positions himself or herself

within the setting to observe actual practice in the field. The use of observations allowed

me to see firsthand the art of instruction and the interactions and engagements with

students and other staff members. I conducted observations in each teacher's classroom

and general observations of the overall school culture.

PART V: DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing data is a systematic process of organizing information into smaller

categories, naming them, also called coding, and then searching for patterns or

connections. The goal is to achieve synthesis with the information in order to make

meaning and broaden understanding for interpretation. I considered data collection,

analysis, and interpretation as processes that must take place simultaneously. I wrote

regularly in a field journal and included memos about methodology, connections to

theory and literature, feedback on possible codes, and attempted to remain open to new

thoughts and ideas as they surfaced. I tried to resist underestimating what might have appeared insignificant at the time as that piece of information may have turned out to be the key to new understanding or a breakthrough in an area where I may have been baffled or blinded by the lenses of my own subjectivity and positionality.

I navigated my way through the project using the process of *thematic analysis* by developing codes that labeled or categorized information on a single topic or idea (Riessman, 2008, p. 53). I developed a code book to assist in refining research questions, interview questions, and focus group discussion topics. I read and reviewed the code book on a regular basis to ensure a continuous process of analysis, interpretation, and openness toward new ideas and missed connections.

PART VI: TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA AND ETHICS

Attempts to convey the lived experiences of participants in rich, descriptive language added trustworthiness to the findings. I made efforts to be aware of and include comments regarding my own bias that I brought to the research process, interpretations, and findings. Creswell (2009) recommended the use of multiple strategies to safeguard the trustworthiness and rigor of data. I built coherence of themes through the process of triangulation and used member checking to allow participants to verify my accuracy in transcripts and interpretations. In addition to spending time in the field to increase accuracy in my findings, I utilized peer debriefing with the district interventionist.

As illustrated by Guba & Lincoln (1989), there is a set of criteria for safeguarding authenticity. I attempted *fairness* by soliciting opposing viewpoints and resistance to the implementation of PCM and by reporting these different perspectives in a balanced fashion. *Ontological authenticity* was addressed by allowing and encouraging

respondents to ask questions about the daily applications of PCM strategies in their specific work environments with the desire that they would become more informed and confident as practitioners. Focus groups provided an avenue for *educative authenticity* as participants listened to other descriptions and interpretations of their experiences. The free exchange of ideas and stories in interviews and focus groups was encouraged to address *tactical authenticity*, the sense of empowerment to act more confidently in decision-making and daily practice.

The ethical risks in this study were at least twofold. First, the Professional Crisis Management system is founded on the principles of safety, dignity, and respect. Practitioners and instructors sign a license agreement to implement PCM strategies and interventions in a standardized manner and to adhere to all protocols and guiding principles. It is made clear in training that operating outside these parameters is a breach of that agreement and that one's license to practice may be revoked.

Second, the matter of confidentiality was of upmost importance to the participants and to me. Inasmuch as I could control my own level of trustworthiness and integrity with the data collected, the possibility existed that the participants would share information from the research with others outside the study.

The anticipated benefits of this study were realized in my newly acquired insight into the primary research question regarding the role of principal leadership and school culture within a system of PCM. Participants reported that the experience helped to sharpen their focus and even enhance their daily practice. Through researcher/participant interactions, our individual and collective perspectives were enriched regarding

leadership, school culture, the use of positive reinforcement and interaction, and how these factors translated into safe and nurturing learning environments for students.

PART VII: ROLE OF RESEARCHER

As an elementary principal in the district where the study was conducted, I was positioned as the participants' colleague as we all shared responsibilities in the district's mission and vision. In addition, I trained and/or re-certified many of the participants and will continue as their instructor for their annual re-certifications. While I do not supervise the participants directly, as one of two district "experts" on PCM, it is my standard that everyone looks to for implementation and practice of the system. Since I am called on occasionally for consultations, I do have a limited or marginal supervisory role with all district PCM practitioners.

My role in PCM placed me as both an insider and an outsider to the participants. As an insider, I share a knowledge base and theoretical construct with other practitioners. But because I was investigating a phenomenon as an expert, my role may be more of an outsider. Ultimately, I considered myself an outsider in this study as I conducted research in other participants' schools. I brought limited knowledge to the project regarding the participants' history or background, and I had not previously observed the culture of the schools. My experience as the first to implement PCM on a school-wide level informed the study in positive ways as I reflected on what I had already observed in my own setting. Likewise, that same experience may have contributed to a lack of objectivity and enticed me to see what I wanted to see in some instances.

RESULTS INTERPRETATION DISCUSSION

PART I: FINDINGS

I conducted a pilot study in a Type II Alternative School in the upstate of South Carolina in the fall of 2011. During the project I created a table of my codes and filled in examples that came first from my memory. I found that this strategy helped bring to mind the most salient thoughts from the interviews that were staying with me during my reflections even while not actually working on the project. As I reviewed the transcripts, I found support for my original codes and connections between what the teacher and principal had to say and the stories they told. Interestingly, they recounted the same incident at lunch and described the power of respect and dignity toward students and the necessity of following a previously established protocol in emergency and daily situations.

Some emerging themes were empowerment, collaboration, trusting relationships, negative vs. positive reinforcement, and strict adherence to the prevention strategies of PCM. There was at least one essential moment in a teacher's story of her evaluation process and how leaders/evaluators who are not trained in PCM or some other positive reinforcement system can judge teacher response to certain behaviors inaccurately. Evaluators without behavior training may view the pivot or extinction as a failure to address a situation when, in reality, those two responses are very effective in decreasing problem behaviors. For the purposes of this discussion, the themes of empowerment, collaboration, and reinforcement were considered together. Trusting relationships was discussed under the scope of PCM prevention strategies.

The principal spoke explicitly about empowerment as she described her goals for the school. She stated that matters of "curriculum, procedures, and administrative details" had been firmly established, "but when it came to providing the staff a focus for discipline…that, I did not have." If fact, the principal referred to having established a "laser-like focus" on empowering teachers. She put together a disciplinary team that would make collaborative decisions about protocol. The principal indicated that her leadership was best expressed in empowering teachers and noted that the implementation of PCM fit seamlessly into that effort.

Likewise, when referring to the noticeable shift in culture at the school, Teacher A spoke immediately about a feeling of being empowered to make decisions not just when the principal was away from the building but on a daily basis. She described a previous situation where she did not feel empowered and stated, "I was at the point where I was scared to do anything. Here, I know that if I hold them (students) for detention …she (the principal) is going to back me up. And she won't question me as to why did you do this. It is not a power struggle here and the kids understand that."

The teachers reported higher levels of confidence when operating from the explicit guidelines developed by the discipline team and could therefore present a more poised and calm demeanor with students. Teacher A stated the guidelines and principal support "make me feel more confident rather than to say I am going to send you to the principal." She reported that "in the past every decision was made by the administrator" and that it was rare now that the principal's attention is required.

The observed interactions between teachers and students reflected the PCM prevention strategy of maximizing relationships. Classroom observations revealed that

alternative school students who were placed here because of inappropriate behaviors in their school of origin responded respectfully to Teacher A and maintained a high level of academic engagement due to the mutual trust between student and teacher. She spoke of her intentionality in building rapport with students through respect, refraining from judgment, and reflective listening.

Similarly, the principal's efforts toward empowerment through trust, shared decision-making, and collaboration were observed in her positive engagements with teachers and students. Teacher A stated that she had felt this kind of professionalism and trust in only one other school in her ten year career. She noted the principal's leadership and the modeling of respect and collaboration as the keys to creating that feeling. She said that "trusting relationships played a major role in the shift in the culture."

The trusting relationships students exhibited with Teacher A were the antithesis of what was observed in Teacher B, who while responding non-reactively, was inundated by constant outbursts and inappropriate remarks from students by giving his attention to negative behaviors rather than reinforcing target behaviors. One student said, "You ain't the principal! Who died and made you the principal?" Another said, "Did you say something about a cat pissing on …something?" Teacher B responded, "No, I said it was raining like a tall cow peeing on a flat rock." Student 9 shouted into his coat sleeve throughout the period with comments like "baldy, spit shine, and Mr. Clean!" Observations revealed a classroom atmosphere characterized by off-task behaviors, outbursts, inappropriate remarks, diminished academic engagement, and the potential for outbreaks of more aggressive and even crisis behaviors.

PART II: INTERPRETATION

School-wide and classroom observations at the institution revealed an overall calm and quiet respect among adults and students. The most obvious contributing factor was the respectful, professional, and calm behavior demonstrated by the principal and some of the staff. The students reflected the behaviors and attitudes that the adults projected. During my first school-wide observation, the School Resource Officer commented that the number of incidents requiring his intervention had dropped dramatically since the arrival of the new principal and the implementation of PCM.

This principal's intentionality to empower teachers and students through modeling and positive interaction coincided with the notion that the principal "acts as a symbol, a potter, a poet, an actor, and a healer in the school environment (Deal & Peterson, 1990)" to create what Barth describes as the "complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization… that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (p. 6).

Further, the principal at the alternative school displayed an internalization of Fullan's (2002) core leadership competencies particularly moral purpose, understanding the change process, and relationship building. It is essential here to connect principal leadership with positive reinforcement and maximizing relationships with the prevention strategies of PCM that are grounded in behavior theory. The consistent combination and practice of principal leadership and the strategies of the Professional Crisis Management system contributed to a positive shift in the school culture. That shift permeated teacher confidence and student performance to the end that students were being reintegrated back

to their schools of origin and were meeting with success. In some cases parents and students submitted requests that the student be allowed to remain at the alternative setting even after meeting all the necessary requirements to return to their school of origin.

PART III: DISCUSSION

The principal at the alternative school demonstrated both a participative leadership style that utilized input from constituents in a shared governance approach and a transformational approach that motivated and inspired followers toward productivity and success based on the strength of their relationships and trust.

A culture theorist recognizes how individuals influence each other when they interact and experience the dynamics of those associations. This interactivity shapes a person's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of reality. O'Reilly and Chapman (1996) described culture as the shared values and norms that define accepted behaviors and the feelings of the members. Cultures develop their own language, perceptions, rituals, norms, values, and feel (or climate).

The interaction of leadership theory and culture theory informed my understanding and interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants in the pilot study. This co-constructed meaning did shed some light on the central research question of the study: What is the nature of the relationship between the role of principal leadership and school culture in a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

PART I: SIGNIFICANCE OF DISSERTATION STUDY

My practical goals for this research project were to continue to encourage and justify the need to train a broad base of PCM practitioners at every school in the district

and to stimulate conversations at the South Carolina Department of Education to consider a shift from the state model of CPI to the more comprehensive system of PCM.

The literature review indicated only a suggestion of the breadth of research that has been conducted on the topics of principal leadership and school culture. The investigation of these two concepts within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management has not been studied in South Carolina, however. According to Fleisig, the leadership and culture relationships to PCM have not been studied in any state (personal communication, November 17, 2011).

My pilot study and conversations with colleagues in the fields of education and behavior analysis affirmed my interest in pursuing the topic on a larger scale. In addition, CPI has been the professional crisis management model for South Carolina since 1991 according to state department official, Michael Paget (personal communication, November 17, 2011). A closer examination of PCM as an alternative to CPI was in order for the state of South Carolina.

PART II: POTENTIAL LARGER AUDIENCE

South Carolina Superintendent of Education, Mick Zais, visited my school on November, 4, 2011. In our discussion, I disclosed our school's success with the use of behavior theory and the specific strategies of PCM. He was unaware of the system and asked me to send him more information. On November 17, I participated with Neal Fleisig and his two top executives in presentations to the Directors of Special Education at the Western Piedmont Education Consortium (WPEC). Later that same day in Columbia, we addressed Marlene Metts, the State Department of Education Director of Children with Exceptional Needs, and State Department Official, Michael Paget, who

initiated the use of CPI in South Carolina. Having contended with a long history of CPI

in our state, it was my hope that a seed of change had been planted in the minds of some

of our decision-makers.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine
it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.

Carl Jung, *The Integration of Personality,* 1939

PART I: INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter One, this study examined the nature of the relationship

between principal leadership and school culture within the school-wide implementation

of Professional Crisis Management. The project also investigated the need for additional

training in behavior theory to equip educators to respond to the needs and behaviors of

increased numbers of students with autism, students who have been traumatized,

neglected, and abused.

The investigation was conducted in a small upstate South Carolina school district

where professional crisis management strategies and procedures have been implemented

on a school-wide basis in at least one school since 2007. Since that time, principals and

teachers in every school have been trained in crisis management, and the strategies and

procedures of behavior theory are now being applied on a district-wide basis. Data for

this research project were collected from principals and teachers in three of these schools

from January through March of 2013.

History

As indicated in Chapter Three, CPI has been the professional crisis management

model for South Carolina since 1991 according to state department official, Michael Paget (personal communication, November 17, 2011). The school district in this study began training special education teachers in PCM in 2005. When the interventionist and I sought PCM instructor certification in 2007, a shift toward district wide implementation of behavior theory began, and the exploration of a new model of crisis management for schools and districts in South Carolina was undertaken.

As of this writing, every principal in the district held a certification in PCM and Professional Crisis Management Association's new program, Behavior Tools. As many as half of the staff at each school were certified in PCM or Behavior Tools, and three schools had the entire staff certified in one or both of the programs. The results of this study argued that new adult behaviors that include maximizing relationships and positive engagements decreased the frequency of problem behaviors, de-escalated pre-crisis and crisis behaviors, and shaped classroom and school environments that promoted social and academic success.

The significance of this district wide effort, however, was best understood through a personal narrative. Brian, a five-year-old, transferred from another state and enrolled in the elementary school where I served as principal. He and his sister were living with a foster family after the Department of Social Services removed them from their previous caregivers. The new foster parents had not been told the children's history. While these circumstances were unfortunate and unsettling, situations like Brian's are not uncommon in today's public schools.

His kindergarten teacher reported Brian's aggressive behaviors on the first day of his matriculation. She noticed his first sign of escalation was to take off his shoes and

throw them at her or the other students. His anxiety and aggression rose very quickly and upon removal from the classroom, he turned over desks and chairs, ripped papers and books, hit and kicked school officials, and engaged in several types of self-injury including attempting to violently ram his head into the corner of a wooden table. He was removed from the classroom as a result of his aggression on an almost daily basis, and while the school counselor and I were certified in CPI, his episodes of destruction and self-injury lasted over an hour before he would de-escalate.

The events that led to Brian's and his sister's arrival to this community were revealed only in bits and pieces over the next couple of years. What we learned was shocking, and the full story, which was not disclosed here, would bring tears. Along with many other horrible injustices in their lives, Brian was physically and sexually abused and severely neglected by the adults in his biological family and early foster care placements. His aggression was so intense that the foster parents elected to turn the children back over to the hands of the state. A second foster home situation ended in the same result, and the children were placed with care-givers in South Carolina.

The school counselor and I managed Brian's behavior as well as could be expected given our level of training, and we were able to keep him from hurting himself and others and to keep him in school. When we earned certification in PCM in 2007, we began using the new system's prevention, de-escalation, crisis interventions, and post crisis strategies with Brian. His aggression began to dissipate and he functioned rather well until third grade when his post traumatic syndrome episodes returned with enormous rage and destructive behaviors. He ended up spending two year-long hospitalizations in state facilities. At the end of each stay, he was re-enrolled in our public school.

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At the time of this writing, Brian was in sixth grade and was functioning well, but his early childhood traumas are likely to follow him throughout the rest of his life. While his story was extreme and disturbing, the school staff and I been called on to accommodate at least another one dozen students who, for various reasons, have exhibited similar violent crisis behaviors. Part of Brian's story was included here to illustrate how ill-equipped school personnel are without additional training in behavior theory and crisis management. Most often when school officials are met with these types of behavior challenges, they follow the discipline code and end up placing the students in alternate settings, and frequently not without a sigh of relief.

Are public schools and districts obligated to accommodate students whose behaviors are this extreme? The superintendent of this district supported that undertaking as a moral and ethical decision to make every effort to equip administrators and teachers to meet the needs of each child who enters their buildings.

PART II: PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

Setting

This study was conducted in an upstate South Carolina Title I public school district of approximately six thousand students. The district was comprised of one high school of 1600 students, three middle schools that ranged in enrollment from 250-400 students, and six 4K-5th grade elementary schools with student populations of 300-650 children. The district poverty index was seventy-four percent. The geographic area was mostly rural, but there was a small downtown square with a few shops and restaurants and a historic district that showcased homes built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Two elementary schools and one middle school were included in the study.

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The principal and three teachers were selected from each of the schools along with one district behavior interventionist (S=13).

Participants were selected using Patton's (2002) purposeful sampling method. In this case a criterion sampling method (p. 238) was incorporated as each participant had undergone additional training in behavior theory and was employed in the district where behavior theory was being applied in all schools. All participants held certifications in either PCM or Behavior Tools or both. The research site was a rare phenomenon as it was the only school district in South Carolina to systematically apply behavior theory in all schools through the strategies and skills required in PCM and Behavior Tools.

Principal Participants

Thomas, the middle school principal, was a white male veteran educator with twenty-seven total years of service and ten years as principal. He held the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration, PCM Level II Practitioner, and Behavior Tools certifications. He had implemented behavior strategies since his initial PCM certification in 2011.

Rebecca, an African American female elementary school principal, held the Ph. D. in Educational Leadership, PCM Level II Practitioner and Behavior Tools certifications. She had twelve years of service in public education and had served five years as principal. She earned her first certification in PCM in 2010.

John was a white male elementary school principal with seventeen years of experience as an educator and five years as principal. He had acquired a Masters in Educational Administration degree plus thirty hours and held the PCM Level II Practitioner (2011) and Behavior Tools (2012) certifications.

Teacher Participants

Ross, a native of India, moved to the United States to teach special education self-contained students eight years ago. He taught one year in India after a career in marketing. He taught first through fifth graders in one classroom and had the services of an instructional assistant. He was a PCM Level II Practitioner and held the Behavior Tools credential.

Jessica was a white female second grade teacher. She earned a Masters in Divergent Learning and was certified as a PCM Level II and Behavior Tools Practitioner. Her initial PCM certification was earned in 2011, and she had7 years of teaching experience.

Hanna, a white female, was completing her third year as an elementary teacher. She taught third grade students in an elementary school of 650 students. She held the PCM Basic Practitioner certification and was a Behavior Tools Instructor. She entered the teaching field with a Basic Practitioner certificate.

Rachael was a white female and Masters level first grade teacher with fifteen years of experience. She earned her Behavior Tools certification in the summer of 2012 and her PCM Level II status in 2011.

Hope, an African-American female, had been teaching special education self-contained students for twenty-eight years. As a special education teacher, she was one of the first to be trained in PCM in 2005. She also earned her Behavior Tools certification in the summer of 2012.

Anne was a white female with a Masters degree with emphasis in Montessori education. She had been teaching for nine years and the last five years in lower

elementary Montessori. She held the PCM Basic Practitioner certification and was a

Behavior Tools Practitioner.

Ruth, a white female, was a Masters level special education self-contained teacher

with three years of experience. She held the PCM Level II and Behavior Tools

certifications.

Cindy, a white female, taught special education self-contained 6th through 8th

grade students. She was in her third year of teaching with one of those years as a high

school special education teacher and was PCM Level II and Behavior Tools trained.

Charlotte was a white female teacher of upper elementary Montessori students in

grades six through eight. She had twenty-eight years of service all in the same middle

school. She held the Masters in Education and had earned an additional thirty hours of

graduate credit beyond her degree. She was a PCM Basic Practitioner and Behavior

Tools Practitioner.

Behavior Interventionist Participant

Nathan was a white male with thirty-eight years of service as a teacher, coach,

administrator, and served as the district behavior interventionist. He and I were the first

and only two administrators in South Carolina certified as Instructors in PCM and

Behavior Tools. He had been implementing the skills and strategies of PCM since 2007

and Behavior Tools since 2012. For the past three years, he had served all schools in the

district providing assistance to teachers and one-one-one interventions with children. He

held the Masters in Educational Administration and had earned and additional thirty

hours of graduate credit beyond the administrative certificate.

Without hesitation, each participant accepted the invitation to be an informant in the study. They expressed an enthusiastic interest in the relationship between leadership, culture, and behavior theory. Their anticipation and energy stemmed from their successes and challenges in the use of leadership and behavior strategies and procedures to assist children and to create learning environments that promote social and academic growth.

After working with the participants through three months of data collection, it was clear that they held to a strong commitment toward their own growth and development. They had the assurance and satisfaction of knowing they were doing everything possible to serve the adults and children under their charge. In multiple ways all of them expressed their pledge to honor the dignity of each adult and child in every circumstance and to view inappropriate and approximate behaviors as grand opportunities to teach new replacement social skills. Their willingness to participate in the co-construction of meaning was invaluable to this study. In the next section, they shared those lived experiences and their commitment to the intentional shaping of their own behaviors to create cultures of learning that optimized growth and development.

PART III: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Central research question:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

Additional supporting questions:

1. What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

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2. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

3. What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

Data were collected from participants through interview, classroom observation, and focus groups during the months of January, February, and March of 2013. The data were transcribed, analyzed, coded, and follow up conversations were held face to face or by email. The findings were presented in the next section.

PART IV: FINDINGS

Research Question One: What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

Principals reported several attributes held in common. They suggested that the attitudes and behaviors that shaped positive school cultures included communication, calm demeanor, respect, and the willingness to lead by example. All principals believed that their demeanor whether it was calm or excited, or stressed, had a marked influence on the school culture. They suggested that their demeanor permeated to teachers and was perpetuated to children in ways that influenced the entire culture. Thomas remarked that "I am least effective when I am excited or stressed" and further indicated that when he "is calm, the whole school is calm" and **"**I would think that attitudes are really good when I am the most controlled person here." The administrators concurred that teachers, students, and staff member reflected what their leader's projected and considered the attitudes and behaviors they put forth to be a strong determinates either negatively or positively in shaping school culture.

The ability to communicate was important among the principals in influencing the school atmosphere. One principal committed to a goal to be more intentional about increasing the number of positive engagements with teachers, students, and parents. Another implied that communication was part of the "people skills" necessary for effective leadership and positive influence. The other revealed that his personality was rather reserved, even shy, and while his written communications were described as 'very strong," he "struggles with oral communication and sometimes hesitates to communicate verbally when I should." Two principals commented only about their communication to others, while one spoke about the power and necessity of quality listening skills.

Modeling or leading by example and demonstrating respect were spoken of explicitly by two of the principals and were strongly inferred by the other. John used the expression of "leading with muddy boots" to make his point about the value of shaping a culture by one's own actions and attitudes. Thomas iterated the impetus of a "willingness to grow alongside others" as his interpretation of leading by example. He believed that this willingness to grow alongside others ensured that "they will grow with you." Their notions about modeling or leading by example were certain, and they seemed confident that they could "be the change" (Gandhi) they wanted to see, and the best way to do that was to strap on the boots.

John made a strong argument for leading by example "You know I can't say to teachers … I can say but it won't be very effective … I want you to treat your students with respect, not use coercives, etc., but at the same time I'm operating completely different opposite from that. Um, I've got to model that for teachers and students. I just think that can't be over-stated … how we as leaders (principals and teachers) how we

respond to others is crucial."

For John, respect was considered a non-negotiable. He encourages his staff regularly to "make sure everyone is treated with respect" in all circumstances. Another participant took a more outside - in approach and said that a leader must be "somebody that people respect." All three principals made a commitment to the guiding principles of PCM and Behavior Tools that included preserving dignity and respect even if they did not speak explicitly about this attribute.

Other behaviors, attitudes, and/or values were mentioned such as honesty, integrity, trust, flexibility, humility, decisiveness, positive attitude, and a strong work ethic. In summary, the principals agreed that the attitudes and behaviors that influenced positive school cultures were respect, communication, modeling or leading by example, and demonstrating a sense of calm. The teacher's responses to question one were revealed in the next section.

Teacher responses to Question One matched the principals' in areas of modeling or leading by example, and communication. They agreed overwhelmingly that communication was critical to shaping a positive school culture. Positive feedback seemed very important to all the teachers, and they linked those feelings of affirmation with a willingness to invest in their leader and their organization. Anne affirmed that "There are so many people who need that positive … you know, tell me what I'm doing right, and then they will go above and beyond to do what they need to do for the children" and "that one compliment can really motivate someone who is just doing a mediocre job to go overboard and do an excellent job."

To the contrary, the absence of positive reinforcement and/or constructive criticism left participants feeling anxious and caused them to question themselves and the quality of their work. Teacher participants associated feelings of support in the same context as affirmation and positive feedback. Jessica expressed, "I think it's all about how that person is and when you feel supported and when you feel the positive feedback … in the schools that I've been in I can see a difference in the morale and the willing to try harder or to do more."

In the eyes of the teachers, communication in the form of positive feedback and affirmation equated to the feeling of being supported, and they placed a high value on that affect to promote investment and hard work. Rachel indicated that effective communication built trust and that a "pat on the back" meant a lot to most teachers. She went on to say, "Personally, I am more willing to work for the common good or the common goal when someone is on my side or truly interested or concerned." Their convictions about affirmation and positive reinforcement aligned with Covey's (2004) notion that people are willing to invest in the organization based on how they are treated by the leadership.

Teachers viewed modeling or leading my example as equally important with positive feedback and supportive communication. All teachers in the sample inferred some form of leading by example with expressions like role model, walk the talk, and setting the example. In response to whether a principal can shape the school cultures, Hanna was adamant. "Yes," she said, "and be intentional about it … and I mean … the leader can know as much or as little about behavior as the rest of them, but until he or she decides to put it into practice then the school culture … is what it is … they are either

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making it positive or they are making it negative … depending on what they are putting into practice."

Charlotte appeared impressed with how her principal had embraced a personal and professional shift toward increasing positive engagements with staff and students and that he not only took the lead in those engagements, but was willing to share his struggles and successes with the faculty. Ruth echoed that sentiment twice to point out how inspired she was to see her principal demonstrating his commitment to change by modeling positive reinforcement with students, teachers, and parents. Ross shared that feeling of inspiration when he referred to his principal's affirmations of him and offered "And that has an imprint on my professional life back in class … I carry that back in class because … I have a student … I need to be modeling the same thing my principal is modeling to me towards her and focus on the positive things and driving towards a common goal."

Confidentiality and trust were linked together by the teachers and considered vital to the building of positive school cultures. It was Cindy who offered that she felt trusted by her principal to do what was best for kids. She explained that he encouraged her to make learning fun for her special education students and that he allowed her and her partner to group kids in ways they thought would best meet the students' needs.

The teachers specified other principal attitudes and behaviors that contributed to a positive school culture. Several thought initiative, determination, passion, and dedication were necessary qualities of a positive influence on the environment. Others saw fairness and equality as paramount to overcoming feelings of isolation or cliques. Hanna was especially concerned that the same few teachers were invited to attend conferences. She

wanted benefits and experiences to be shared equally for everyone, not just the "chosen few." Hope concurred with the value of fairness and added her propensity toward consistency when she stated "that's important to me for you to be a good leader, I have to know what to expect from you. I don't like on Monday you are this way and on Tuesday you are this way."

The matters of relationship building and trust were expressed by the teachers mostly through the language of support and positive reinforcement. One principal talked explicitly about trust, another alluded to trust with words like honesty, integrity, and respect. The other principal said nothing about trust or relationship building. In summary, the teachers thought modeling as iterated by one principal as "leading with muddy boots" was very important. The subject of support was described as being best accomplished through effective communication, positive reinforcement, affirmation, confidentiality, and encouraging and constructive feedback.

Research Question Two: In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

The principals agreed that adult behaviors can influence learning environments in positive ways. In a discussion of an escalation-de-escalation-reintegration cycle, John referred to the condition of stable functioning, the lowest level on the PCM crisis continuum. He connected stable functioning (high cognition capability resulting from low-stress, low-physiology) with learning when he said "I think that goes back to de-escalating, getting the child back to stable functioning and moving on. I think that's where we have to put our attention, that's where the focus needs to be is students need to be in class, they need to be stable enough where they can learn**."** He added that "the idea

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of escalating is just a no-win situation … the child loses, the teacher loses, you know minutes are important, and if you spend 5 -10 minutes in a verbal confrontation with a student, not only are you losing that time you could be using for other students, you are eroding the respect you have among your students, you are causing them to probably have less ability to participate in class and respond appropriately in future situations."

Thomas discussed his decision of two years ago to change his personal and professional demeanor by increasing the number of positive engagements and reinforcements with teachers and students. He reported a distinct difference in the atmosphere of the school as a result of his actions and used the in-coming sixth grade class to illustrate his point: **"**I think my job has been to be more settling to everybody, to be visible, you know between every class, I'm there … having some interaction with people" and he continued with "Because the last 2 years in 6th (grade) we've gone way beyond how long it should take to get people doing the things that you want them to do without being coercive and directing … having to direct every move. And I want to get away from that because all that distracts from the classrooms ..." This principal had made a commitment to emphasize relationship building and to avoid of coercive language as mainstays for next year because he had seen the results in reducing the number of discipline referrals and increasing focused and meaningful instructional minutes.

Rebecca offered her thoughts on the subject of reducing episodes of escalation and discipline referrals and stated "I definitely see that, and you know it's … what I see is kind of like from year to year … it's like one year this student may have been a discipline problem or in the office, but then the next year you rarely know the student is in the building. And I account a lot of that to the teacher because the teacher's influence and

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the way they handle certain situations and the ability to be able to de-escalate certain behaviors and be able to pivot away from different behaviors as well, so I definitely see where there are some that are not as skilled in de-escalating and getting this child back on task and there are others who do an excellent job with it and you are wondering why this child had referrals the previous year."

These examples from the principals highlighted the concept that teachers and administrators may choose their own behaviors in any given situation, and these behaviors influence school and classroom cultures. They were convinced that positive interactions promoted learning, preserved instructional minutes, de-escalated problem behaviors, and reduced discipline referrals.

When asked about intentionally increasing the positive engagements in her life, Anne told part of her story of introducing the concepts of behavior theory into her work. Excerpts from the narrative were included here:

It takes work, you know, some people have to work harder than others, but I know it's a choice because I haven't always been this way. Um, there was a time years ago when I thought I was going to have to find another job because I just couldn't handle it anymore. And now it would be very hard for me to walk away so um, I think you just have to … I think it takes a lot of training on the subject. I think a lot of times you don't know what your thought process is until someone points it, and then when you do figure out the problem and changing that behavior and making the point to change it … everything can change for everybody. I can give you this example.

I came back from maternity leave last year um, I went out in September I think 5 or 6 weeks after school started and I didn't come back until the week of Thanksgiving

break ... so I missed a lot of that really laying the ground work for my class last year

which my second and third graders knew a lot about what I expected but my first graders

didn't ... had a long term sub. Came back for 3 weeks ... really about to go crazy ...

trying to get my class back to where I wanted them and I was having to start over from

day one. Well, then we were told first day back from school we would have to go to PCM

training. And that one training changed the rest of my year ... completely. In fact, I'm

not telling a story because I emailed (the instructor) and thanked him for the training ...

(laugh) ... that is true. It changed from day one coming back from that training

...everything changed for my class ... and me.

Anne made specific changes in her behaviors that brought about the shift in her

outlook and commitment toward her work and ignited a transformation in her classroom.

She immediately began using the strategies and skills from the behavior training such as

maximizing choice, posting and reviewing clear rules and expectations each day,

providing students with opportunities to earn privileges rather than a more negative

approach of taking things away, pivoting away from junk behavior, practicing the

language of positive engagement and reinforcement, and generally taking on a more

redemptive vs. punitive model of classroom leadership.

Ross described the successes brought on my changing his behaviors. He

explained that he began to use, "the pre-crisis prevention strategies. That's the main

thing to (get) them stable to function (the stage of stable functioning) … that works, sir.

Yes, that is the important thing, building relationships, positive reinforcements, and

establishing rapport, and focusing on the positive things. These really work with the

prevention strategies … the underlying principles (of behavior training) … taught one

important – that I need to change as an adult. My perspective has to change. So really that change and one important thing I can tell out of my experience … pivoting and pivot praise – these are the most powerful! Most powerful!"

Regarding whether a teacher can actually shape the course of a child's life, Ross had a story to share.

"I will tell you an example, he began, I had a student … here in kindergarten and … of course he used to take off, he would run, and the principal and other administrators had to run after him. So, finally, he was institutionalized when he was in 3rd grade I think, and then he was back and came straight to my class. Um, after one year he was institutionalized, he came here. So initially he started the same thing. He used to run off. I studied a lot about that boy … I saw the potential in him, then … I used these techniques with him and these techniques were what really worked with him. So I figured it out and really it worked. And I was really proud of that boy … the potential was high … he can do a lot of things I can see, so I thought if I can contain his behaviors, those negative behaviors, and then eventually I saw the progress in him. Now, unfortunately he left after these holidays. He moved to Kentucky. I saw that, sir. I saw that progress, and you can change the course of the student behavior … life … I was really proud of that boy! And the same student … when he was in the second grade … he said he would get a gun to shoot me … shoot me down …Now, I think he is in 10th or 11th (grade).

Hesitant to take any credit, Ross did agree that the changes he made in his own behavior, the strategies from behavior training, and his strong belief in the child did contribute to the boy's success. With conviction, he concluded "and only a teacher can do it. A teacher has the privilege of doing that … changing the course of life …"

All the teachers chimed in with examples of adult behaviors that shaped environments and school cultures that promoted learning. Considering how the school or classroom culture contributed to lowering stress from students and promoted academic growth, Charlotte added, "I think so, and especially since our whole staff went through training over the summer at some point we all had a common language of how to deal with the different situations that might come up … the stressors and how to help de-stress, and I think because of that it helps kind of de-stress throughout the school." She went on to explain how she felt validated when she realized how closely the techniques of positive reinforcement and relationship building matched with the Montessori philosophy of "honoring the child" and "wearing the shroud of humility."

Hanna spoke about the impact of removing coercive language and suggested "I think one of the most powerful things about that class (Behavior Tools) for me was learning about all of those coercives … because I still did that stuff … at the beginning of that year. And I think … how important it is to stop doing those things and change our behavior has made a totally different classroom." As much as anyone, she seemed to have taken the Behavior Tools motto: *Good Behavior Gets Good Stuff* to heart and insisted that having the opportunity to earn privileges promoted social development and enhanced academic achievement.

Rachel compared the negative impact of stress on musical or athletic performance with classrooms and academic growth. She said "Yes, just like Miss America. Some of those girls sang and it wasn't that good, and I thought they must be good singers, but because of the stress, it didn't come off great." When asked how much she could shape a learning environment, Ruth replied, "I think a lot. I mean I don't think you can put a

number to it like a percentage or anything like that, but I notice on days when I brought my A game, and I am following Behavior Tools as my Bible if you will, those are the best days that we have. And if I decided not to follow the procedure like if I got frustrated with a child or something like that, if I don't follow, it doesn't go as well. It doesn't go as well for the child, and it doesn't go as well for me. So, I've pretty much made the conscious decision to adopt Behavior Tools all the time. And it definitely helps shape their behavior."

Cindy described the influence of her confidence and determination for her eighth grade special education self-contained students:

I have ten 8th graders this year who want more than anything to be in regular ed., and they come to my math group at the beginning of the year … and they start whining and I say un, un, we are not whining. We are going to get you to the 9th grade. This is hard, but you're going to learn it. They said, thank you Ms. Cindy. You know he knew she's not playing. She's going to make sure I learn this not because she's mean but because she cares … she wants me to go … if you want a diploma … I can do that for you … but you gon have to work. I can put you on a diploma track. I can teach you what you need to know. It's gon be hard, but we'll do it together! And he just looked at me and said thank you. That makes it worth it.

And he supposedly can't read because that's why they all come in (to special education) … and to have a kid reading on a second grade level that has a 90 in 8th grade math class. Nobody ever told him he could do it until I said you are going to math (out to a regular education class) this year … (laugh) that's just it … that's what gon happen! You're going to math!

Hope reflected back on the year she was trained in Behavior Tools and summarized the importance of changing adult behaviors by saying, 'But anyway, that particular year, that changed my life!… and that's what I say about changing the school, I had to change me in my class, and it changed my whole class, and so I can see that on a mini level, and I can see it on a grand level for the school you know, so I do know it does work that way."

To summarize, principals and teachers agreed that adult behaviors influenced school and classroom environments. They shared examples or stories describing how specific adult behaviors can increase instructional minutes, improve the quality of those instructional minutes by prevention and de-escalation strategies, and reduce the number of discipline referrals. Also, they noted that their expectation, their confidence, their belief in the student made a substantial difference in the student's academic performance and goal achievement.

Research Question Three: What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership, PCM, and school culture?

In question three, participants were called on to summarize or to synthesize their thinking. The principal's responses included Rebecca's thoughts on how a positive attitude, respect for others, building relationships, and making decisions based on what is best for students permeated her leadership and the application of behavior theory within their school culture:

Um, well I definitely think that … just having a positive attitude, um being very positive … and there are times when you have to have some very difficult conversations or there are some very difficult things that are going on, but overall and in general the teachers

still know that you are very fair, that you are consistent and, um they respect that about

you and they know that you would never disrespect them … but it's all about the children,

keeping your vision at the forefront so having a clear vision I guess and then, um …

being very positive and calm and building those relationships and that community within

the school. So I think those things are major components of how the principal can have a

very positive impact … I definitely believe we are in here, we all have a job to do, at the

same time you show that respect to the teachers um, and they know that you care, you

care about them and you care about the students … what is best … and so if you can get

them to buy into that, then they will know the decisions you make or have to make

sometimes are what is best for children …

Thomas reflected the influence of his role as principal: "Well, "I think … it's kind

of scary that leadership and style have that big an impact, but is does and it probably has

more impact than I realize … but even if it is in a small way how I treat them, how I lead

this faculty does have an influence on how they function. You know if teachers feel

appreciated and supported, they are going to perform better in the classroom, and the

students are going to be the winners there."

When asked if educators were equipped to manage some of the behaviors they

encountered in schools, he continued:

I think that's not a school issue, it's a society issue … we are mirrors of our

society, and so just I think … in the last 5 years, we've seen our poverty level increase as

the economy has affected families and as things at home get more difficult, kids sense

those things and are affected by those things … it makes our job even more difficult

because we have more kids that are affected … take care of the social, emotion, physical

needs, everything so I definitely think we … the more we understand about how kids behave and why they behave the way they do, the better equipped we are to address those behaviors and to help get them through those behaviors and get them back to stable functioning and being able to succeed in the classroom. We definitely need more for teachers in behavior theory and dealing with behaviors … I definitely think we are at a point where we can't go back, we can't stop doing these things … I have seen … we have more than half maybe two thirds of our teachers trained in Behavior Tools, and I have seen a change you know even if you look at the number of discipline referrals for example … those are down this year.

Discussions with principals revealed feelings of frustration and inadequacy that administrators and teachers had felt in the past when their response to problem behaviors was to simply apply the discipline code. Now, having been exposed to additional training, John expressed a new sense of responsibility:

We have been given the skills to deal with those problem behaviors and if nothing else, we have raised their awareness of the fact that there is a different way to respond. When we talk about how it's counter-productive to engage with a student, to escalate, to quote kick them out of class, you know I think that has an effect and it gives them a reason to pause and think – alright, how do I need to respond to the student? I think it's had a big impact. I think … it is sad to think over the years like the child you just described would have been cast aside and as school people we just kind of washed our hands of those people, you know, I can't do anything with them. Now we can't really say that. We have this knowledge now … if we don't use it, it's kind of on us so to speak. I think it's just a … almost a mandate that we use what we have … and I've said before …

there are … in any school you've got kids that come from similar situations. We've had

kids we have spent countless hours, there is no telling if we were to add up teacher,

counselor, assistant principal, other people in the school have spent with some of these

children. People on the outside just would not believe how much time it takes to deal

with some of these students. But in the end in most cases we get those students to a point

where they can function … and … but before … we would have given up on them. So the

better equipped we are, the more we use these skills, the more effective we are going to

be and the more quickly we are going to be able to get some of these students to a point

where they can function in a regular classroom and as close to being on grade level as

possible.

Thomas described how leadership, culture, and the application of behavior theory
had shaped the very core of his organization particularly in the areas of work ethic and
positive interactions.

Oh, I think definitely … certainly that training has and is impacting me um, and I

think that as we shape our culture, we try to do it consistently every day. It's kind of like

you tell them you don't get days back in the classroom … well, we don't get days back

either, we don't take days off from … it used to be for me we discipline every day, we do

discipline every day for 180 days … well, I don't know maybe that is changing to … we

work hard every day for 180 days … a different way of saying it … we are going to pay

attention to the rules, we pay attention to the rules 180 days so that's my … that is my …

I think kids know that. And I think PCM helps you in the mindset that you have as to …

that you are working more positively every day so you know that foundational thing of

work ethic is always there and has always been there but it's changed to we have to do it

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… we have to show that differently than maybe we have in the past … it's not a crack the whip mentality, it's more of what you described while ago … let's roll up our sleeves and get to work … all of us and do it consistently, and that's the expectation … You have to bring that every day, so I think that that type of training helps you to get where you want to be in a better way, probably in a more productive way for us. And it's really fitting in nicely to where we are trying to go … um … and it will be something that I will go back to at the beginning of the year and we'll talk about … we will review the 3 major parts of that training … talk about it some more and maybe get somebody in here to give us a day of refresher, and whoever comes in new is going to need to take it … the whole thing. If that answers … I definitely think they (combined impact of 3 components) are connected … Oh, yeah I think it helps change your mind set in a way that will be more productive just like I told you, when I'm in control and I'm positive, the whole place is more like that.

Teachers expressed their views on the combined impact of the three components of the study. Hope iterated, "… with the PCM training comes also the teachers treating each other a certain way, and children see, that's other relationships they witness and kind of model themselves after, so you know the PCM training does not just … it affects the whole school in ways you really don't think about cause it's going to change the way I speak to Mrs. Lane or Mrs. Evans about something and the way that I talk to them about children …"

Jessica offered her summary statement: "I think when you have the knowledge of PCM and you understand the positive reinforcement, the relationship, the behavior tools

… you have the support from your leadership, you have the good communication, the good relationship that comes from using it, your school culture is going to change."

Cindy saw relationships as the most influential component of the culture. She reflected, "I mean like I said it's in the relationships … that's where it's at, that's my big thing I mean I think you know the relationships … once they are built it sets the tone for the environment … ."

Ruth took a strong stance on principal influence and specified, "I definitely think that principal leadership has the potential to make or break school climate, I mean they do set the tone just like the teacher sets the tone for the entire classroom … the principal sets the tone for the entire school. And so, I definitely think that when a principal is trained in behavior theory and implements that … in their own life there is definitely a correlation. I can see a difference in the school climate here since we've all been trained and implemented that verses last year when we had not."

For Hanna, taking behavior theory to heart in everyday practice was the difference maker. She presented her thoughts it this way: " … leadership really takes to heart what behavior theory says … let's reinforce, let's not talk about consequences, let's really live up to that word disciple meaning to teach … I think if the leadership is using behavior theory on everybody … not just a teacher or a bus driver but everybody … I think if it's from top down us teachers are going to use it with kids … I think that then it's going to create positive school culture that we want to see."

Charlotte drew from her many years of service to describe her experience with leadership, culture, and behavior theory: "I would say that this has made a very, very positive impact in our school culture. You know having been here for 28 years I've seen

leaders come and go, and I've seen it all, and things just kind of go by the wayside for a while and it … goes away. But this is something that is changing behaviors which has the potential I think to change lives … and especially for our adolescents."

Ross shared that the action taken by his principal to see that everyone was trained in applications of behavior theory was, in itself, a positive gesture because it had shaped and changed things for the better. He spoke of the shift in his own life: "If you take the behavior training, everybody is trained in this building … see, if I take, for instance, as an example, I have changed a lot, my perspective has changed towards the kids and helping implement … so it's good … the principal leadership has really … (taken) a role in training the whole staff and faculty so, yeah, … that way everybody is positive … I can see that … the students … are also happy about it … and preserving the dignity of the child, yes."

Focus Groups

The teacher informants and the behavior interventionist were invited to participate in focus groups. Two sessions were held in order to balance the number in each group and to provide maximum opportunity for each voice to be heard. The interventionist participated in both focus groups. Session one consisted of Nathan, Ruth, and Jessica. Sessions two included Nathan, Charlotte, Hanna, Rachel, and Cindy. Ross and Hope were unavailable.

The following questions were used to facilitate the discussion:

1. Principals in the Western Piedmont Educational Consortium (WPEC) assemble twice a year for a full day of professional development in Greenwood. Given the opportunity to address this group of administrators, what would you like to say to

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them about leadership, culture, behavior theory, and setting the conditions for optimal social and academic success?

2. What leadership actions/behaviors, if any, help create a sense of trust, safety, support, and affirmation and how do those actions/behaviors influence your physiology?

3. What, if any, additional training do administrators and teachers require to meet the needs of today's students?

Focus Group Question One

Principals in the Western Piedmont Educational Consortium (WPEC) assemble twice a year for a full day of professional development in Greenwood. Given the opportunity to address this group of administrators, what would you like to say to them about leadership, culture, behavior theory, and setting the conditions for optimal social and academic success?

Recognizing the need for additional behavioral intervention and staff support, the school district hired a behavior interventionist. Nathan, a former administrator, stepped into the role three years ago and served all schools in the district. His experience and expertise were invaluable in the study as he was involved daily in the most challenging and critical situations. He opened the focus group conversation with these thoughts for principals on the matter of optimal and social and academic success, "after 3 years as interventionist (I've learned) that without optimal social skills, there is no academic success … their leadership and the culture they set with us … come to the idea that everybody is here for every child, not a territorial thing …I would tell them we all have to be in this together …"

Nathan's comment led to a discussion about students whose behaviors were extreme. As pointed out in Chapter One, schools are faced with more and more children with autism and students who have been abused or neglected or traumatized. Their behaviors often included screaming, hitting, biting, and running away. Intense one-on-one interventions were required with these children to reshape their behaviors before they could achieve academic success. And in that context, Nathan continued with, "(it's) not a one man show anymore … I would tell all those principals … you be the one out there helping … leading …it's a culture of learning."

Even with proper training, "it is impossible" Nathan pointed out, "for one person to do the intervention and teach the class … you have to be hands-on. You know what they (principals) can do to show support … sit by one of these ladies and roll your sleeves up and get your hands dirty." And Jessica interjected, "… going back to administration, if they are in here and they are reading … it makes the teachers feel better, it makes the children more excited, it makes them better, it makes the trust … better."

Hanna responded,

You were talking about kids whose behaviors are biting and kicking … I think we as classroom teachers we would probably all want to say to administration, you've got to come in there and show us what to do if we haven't been trained, show us … but you've got a 5 year old who is terrorizing those 30 other kids … come in here … look at what's going on … look at how it is disrupting my class, you know maybe observe the first couple of times, but actually sit in here and help me figure out how to fix the problem

rather than writing him up and sending him home or ISS. I think actually getting in there to help solve the problem would probably be what we want to say ...

I can think back to one instance where I needed help and nobody was around to come and help me. Or if there is such an extreme case to take that child out of the classroom and be able to settle them down and back to a place where they are ready to come back to class. I just think coming in and doing rather than here's a book or here's a training you can go to, here's a DVD ... show me what you want me to do, you know we are supposed to be modeling to our kids all day long, as an administrator I think it is really important for them to model to us what they expect, you know also to be there to help work together in coming up with plans, coming up with ideas ...

Nathan followed with, "I am talking about a culture too. That culture where everybody works together ... Be aware that the principal's job is impossible just like your job is impossible ...all that's expected of them from the district office and to do one-on-one! There has to be a priority of why are we here ... somebody needs to make a decision about pushing papers or turning in a report ... I say put the report somewhere else and let's go help this kid."

Focus Group Question Two

What leadership actions/behaviors, if any, help create a sense of trust, safety, support, and affirmation and how do those actions/behaviors influence your physiology?

Ruth started the conversation with, "I agree with that and I would say it's important for the principal to instill the values and vision within the teachers too ... if you are going to have a no territory thing then I think you are going to have a ...you have to develop a community of high trust among the teachers so it definitely has to be more of a

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collaborative community than anything else." Jessica spoke of ways trust can be established, "I just keep thinking about Behavior Tools … doing things to strengthen the relationship, using reinforcement … things like that I think would help build trust with your administrator."

Ruth continued,

I definitely agree with what she said … my principal has gone through Behavior Tools, and I've noticed a huge difference I think in the morale of the faculty and the willingness to do things, reach for those stretch goals that he set for us simply because you do feel that he believes in you and he wants what's best for you. He is trying to build a relationship with you. I have definitely noticed our principal using Behavior Tools, and it makes you want to strive for those expectations. And it just makes you more confident … who you're working for … But the more Behavior Tools that principal uses, the more trust you are going to build in them [right] and I have definitely seen a level of trust increase in our school this year when we have been able to talk through some things with our administrators without necessarily worrying so much because we know at the end of the day they are about trying to support us and not the kind of gotcha mentality.

Then she added this thought about her principal's willingness to share his struggles with the staff, "And one of the biggest things he's done this year is he talks to us about when he fails with Behavior Tools. He will come to us and say, today I saw a kid in the hall and I did this, and I shouldn't have, so I stopped myself and I apologized, and that just makes me want to cry! I think that is like the sweetest thing for a leader to be able to say, I messed up, and this is how I fixed i**t** … that makes you feel like … that makes me feel like you'll help me fix it when I mess up."

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Anne chimed in on the value of affirmation from the principal:

"I think this goes back to what Hanna was saying about seeing the teachers and the administration in the building talking and then you are saying that we are all here for one reason, and I had and I started thinking about one of my little girls who struggled in reading all year and she suddenly moved up on the Domini about 4 levels in two months and I was so excited and when I ran to tell someone to share that celebration, the response was … well, she is still not a 7 – that's where we need her to be, a 7. And I'm so excited and I am jumping for joy and what happens to me when I get that response – I immediately shut down and walked away and just about cried and wanted to give up. And I think the response I wanted was wow she came up that much in 2 months – keep doing what you're doing or something motivating but instead, I didn't get anything other than she's not where she needs to be. Well, I knew she wasn't where she was supposed to be.

When asked what she would say to the principals, she continued, "we need to celebrate even the small things, and make connections with each other so that we can foster the learning even more." To that Jessica inserted, "there is a level of trust here … that's what you are saying, we need to establish a relationship with each other." Anne picked up the thread again, "And most teachers have some kind of a relationship and there is always new people but I'm talking about administration … knowing their teachers in a way they want us to know the students and I don't mean they have to get all in your business, but you know if they knew a little something about you instead of just the scores that are on a sheet of paper that reflect what they think you're teaching … that would be nice."

Hanna added, "Sometimes we feel that we are supposed to be positive and we are supposed to be uplifting and we need that from above. I think it's really hard to be positive and peppy and all excited when nobody is like that for you. You know what I'm saying?"

The question was put to Anne about how differently she would have felt if she had been met with affirmation when she shared the child's progress with the principal. She replied, "Well, I would not have wanted to go back and not cry (laugh) but I would have been excited and I had already wanted to share the news with the child's mother and I did and you know I feel like I would be more energized to go in … but I know why Nathan you don't know why you still need to hear these things, but it's because they build confidence, and when you build confidence and you feel sure of yourself and you feel like you can take on anything."

"And if you don't have that trust" Rachel confirmed, "that relationship with your principal or if they haven't built it with you, then you are going to hesitate to go in and be honest. And I've heard of that situation several times when people want to say something but they fear that it will black ball them."

Nathan brought up the notion of how stress contributes to physiology, "The key word here in that question is physiology. And as I go in to different schools sometimes the physiology of the teachers is up, tense, stressed, frustration, you can tell the heart rate is up, their blood pressure is up and of course, if you … if behaviors that create a sense of trust, support, and affirmation … I promise you, the staff is going to physiologically de-escalate themselves. They are going to be calmer. And if you have a calm teacher, I will just about guarantee just about anybody anywhere that that class is going to be calm. I

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mean it's already been proven with data and experiences. If you're agitated, the kids are going to be agitated, if you are calm, they are more likely to be calm."

Jessica was adamant about principals modeling the behaviors they expect from teachers, "But I laugh. I laugh at this in my head because this … because I'm thinking this is what our administrators tell us to do at the beginning of the school year. To form that relationship … you're telling me to do it! You do it!"

Anne commented on leading my example, "My children watched a folk tale today and it had a moral to it that stuck in my head. The main character learned that a good leader leads by example and so I feel like a good leader if they want us to problem solve, etc. then if we need help let us see you doing some of this too. Also, if you want us to build relationships with the children, we need to see you build relationships with the children to promote a positive environment. Not just with children."

Nathan continued the idea, "But the culture does start at the top. I hate to put that on one person but let's face it if my name is on the plaque and I am going to be responsible for your test scores and I want these test scores up and I don't want any excuses. But if you've got a person who says I realize there are pressures, I got your back, let's all do this together. You are going to kill for that principal." To a remark about the principal's power to decide who gets to decide, Charlotte reflected, "That's where that trust comes in … they can be an expert in their classroom and you are coming in and kind of getting in with that environment … if it's just observation, but you are giving them power when you tell them that you trust them to be the expert in the classroom."

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Nathan summed it up with, "I would tell those principals it's all about the golden rule, but you have to take the time to do it."

Focus Group Question Three

What, if any, additional training do administrators and teachers require to meet the needs of today's students?

Ruth was first to respond:

It was easier for me to adopt Behavior Tools and make that my Bible because I had had PCM. So I had a little bit of background in it. But there are some teachers I know not necessarily at my school or whatever I'm just saying ... they do come from an old school mindset and have had no training and then they take 2 days of Behavior Tools and that's it. And yes, our administrators are nice and made us a little handout like this and bring it up in faculty meetings, but the ones that are frustrated and haven't bought in to it are the ones that do have a physiology that you've talked about, and they need additional training because it's very obvious that they are very unhappy, their students are unhappy, they are the ones that are writing referrals and stuff like that ...

Nathan replied with, "When I was introduced to positive reinforcement and the system that PCM uses, it was … almost biblical. It was the golden rule. This is how you treat people the way you want them to treat you. And this is how you do that, not just say it, but shows you how … I used to say get that look off your face! That's what I use to say. I wouldn't say you look angry, I'd say get that look off your face. I'd say change your attitude! And a lot of times it would escalate. And I didn't realize I was the one escalating it. The adult … when I figured that out … it changed my whole life … I was the one doing it, it wasn't the kid, it was me (laugh and a whoo!)!"

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Jessica exclaimed, "I sitting here, and I'm thinking Gosh (gol?), this is me, this is me! … My husband and I had this conversation last night … he sees a difference in me! I'm a different person now. I'm more … I've come to grips with the way things … some things are going to be, but I've changed myself … and my kids are different! But I think about this, and we talk about continuing the training, but I think it goes back to … it has to start here (gesture with hand high in the air to indicate leadership) … However, when you have the leadership believing in it and practicing it every day, it is more likely that the teachers and other faculty will conform to the program."

When it was pointed out that these comments were about preserving the dignity of the child, it was Nathan who remarked, "That's right. And there is nothing more important than that. I think especially in today's society when there seems to be a lot less of that. So when we can do it as teachers, administrators, as janitors, I'm talking about the whole school."

Summary

Participants agreed that principal leadership was the strongest influence on school culture. They concurred on the necessity of additional training in behavior management in order for educators to meet the needs of increased numbers of students exhibiting the most aggressive problem behaviors as well as the simplest routines and procedures of daily school life. The informants believed that Professional Crisis Management and Behavior Tools training changed adult behaviors and that these behaviors permeated and shaped school cultures that promoted social and academic development.

According to all participants, the most valued principal behaviors and attitudes that positively influenced school cultures were communication, a calm demeanor,

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respect, modeling, positive reinforcement, trust, and building relationships. When exposed to the consistent display of these leadership behaviors and attributes, teachers were more willing to invest in their leaders and schools and were inspired to work harder and go the extra mile.

Observation Data

I conducted observations in eight out of the nine classrooms and spent time observing in the general areas of the schools. Each teacher in the study displayed the tools of positive reinforcement, varying praise statements, positive engagements with students and adults, and building and strengthening relationships. Students appeared confident, aware of expectations, on task, and comfortable in their surroundings.

The classroom environments were quiet, ordered, engaging, and children seemed happy, content, and ready to learn. In each case, teachers had established clear routines and procedures for each function of the day, and students followed these routines with little need for direction. Teachers appeared to have made it a habit to model behaviors and attitudes they desired from the children. These positive attitudes were reflected in the students' interactions with their peers and their teachers.

Interestingly, two classroom observations that revealed all the components described in the preceding paragraph were flanked by other classrooms that were loud and lacked organization. In both cases the classrooms were connected by a cased opening, and I could see and hear children who seemed uncertain about direction, were off task, and were playing around instead of working. The teacher voice was loud, negative, and her engagements with students who were off task were reactive rather than responsive.

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This study investigated a school-wide implementation of behavior theory, and the observations revealed various levels of implementation. These different levels of implementation were obvious as I visited in hallways and other general areas of the school. I spent time in major intersections where teachers brought students by to use the restrooms on their way to and from the cafeteria. I noticed a difference in student behavior based on what their teachers were modeling. For example, students in two classes I observed in a ten minute span were talking and playing around while their teacher was using loud, coercive, and punitive language to try to correct their behavior. When teachers modeled respect, affirmation, and positive reinforcement, students were generally more compliant.

Cindy stated her frustrations with certain teachers who were loud, negative, and coercive. She complained that "they just need to chill! Their lives would be so much better if they would just calm down and be more positive."

Jessica and Hanna confided that they had felt a lack of support with a student whose behaviors were very difficult to manage. While on the way to visit with Jessica, I saw the class coming down the hall and noticed that one of her students was on the floor displaying highly aggressive behaviors. Jessica stopped to intervene with the child, and I walked the rest of the class to the room. She thanked me later and said, "You just don't know how much that meant to me … our principal has seen me in that kind of situation on more than one occasion and he "just watched me struggle" and offered no assistance.

Hanna described what she considered a lack of administrative support when she had a class with several difficult students. She said that administrators would come in to observe but offered no assistance in managing the behaviors. She said she felt like they

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were judging her and found it hard to believe that "they just left me alone to deal with it."

PART V: CONCLUSION

The participants in the study were generous and forthright in their responses to questions and discussions regarding principal leadership, school culture, and the application of behavior theory in their daily practice. I meticulously transcribed their words and stories and carefully reviewed them through multiple lenses.

The lens of narrative processes stimulated my awareness that the narrator gives meaning to his or her life through stories and descriptions. The language lens reminded me that narratives are part of a social process whereby meaning and reality are constructed. I tried to be mindful of the context of culture (social, political, historical) and significant moments or epiphanies that informants described. As McCormick (2000) suggested, attention to these multiple lenses assisted me in "reducing the distance between an individual's understanding of his or her life and (my) interpretation of his or her life." (p. 282).

In the process of data analysis I began categorizing various codes into groups or themes. The three most predominant themes or concepts emerged as challenges for the educational administrator:

Challenge One: Maximizing positive engagements

Challenge Two: Meeting the behavioral needs of students in a changing society

Challenge Three: Embracing a redemptive paradigm

In Chapter Five, I developed each challenge and provided a model for schools and districts that addressed the increasing demands and responsibilities of principal leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

We teach who we are.

Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach,* 2007

PART I: INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Five I provided the findings of the study and reflected on their meaning. The following sections were included: purpose of the study, overview of the literature, research questions, overview of the methodology, major findings and implications, recommendations for further study, potential larger audience, and conclusion.

PART II: PURPPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study examined the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management (PCM). It identified principal, teacher, and behavior interventionist perceptions of the connections between leadership and school culture, the influence of additional training in behavior theory, and the challenges of behavior management in our changing society.

While school personnel are responsible for managing increasing numbers of aggressive and even crisis behaviors, this study showed that additional training in behavior theory was not only necessary for today's educators but provided positive reinforcement for all students and promoted a healthy and positive school culture.

Without this extensive additional training, however, teachers and staff members were ill-equipped to deal with some of the problem behaviors. PCM and its companion course, Behavior Tools, were based on the guiding principles of dignity, respect, and safety. The participants in this study were trained and certified in one or both of these programs.

PART III: OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There was considerable research on the link between leadership and organizational culture (Collins, 2001; Covey, 2004), principal leadership and school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009) and principal leadership, school culture, and student outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005).

Bohanon, Fenning, and Carney (2006) found "some success" with the implementation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS or PBIS) as indicated by a decrease in monthly discipline referrals and fewer students requiring additional support. Other studies showed similar findings on the effect of positive behavior support (Medley & Little, 2007; Stormont, Smith & Lewis, 2007; McDonald 2010). However, there was little to no research connecting principal leadership to school culture within the construct of a school-wide implementation of the PCM system and no such studies have been conducted in South Carolina. Hence, the need for this inquiry was justified.

I learned from the participants in this study, particularly from the interventionist who worked in all schools in the district, that there have been positive shifts in school cultures where principals and teachers were intentional about applying behavior theory in their settings. The model of school wide behavior intervention that was adopted in this district actually began in my own school. As a principal, PCM and Behavior Tools practitioner and instructor, I have seen firsthand the value and influence of leadership and

behavior theory on school culture.

Historical Context

I included a story to illustrate the findings of this study.

Daniel transferred from another county to our school late in November of 2011. As a five-year-old, he had already been identified by the sending school as special education self-contained. He exhibited three primary behaviors; screaming, biting, and running away. Based on his records from the previous school and their special education identification, we placed him in our self-contained class.

In the first couple of days of his aggression, screaming, attempts to run away, and his lack of success in an experimental placement in a 4K classroom, we knew he needed additional support. Our counselor, a PCM Level II Practitioner and Behavior Tools Instructor, asked to provide a one-on-one intense intervention for the child. We placed Daniel on a modified school day schedule, and the counselor began a token economy and behavior shaping program that reinforced even his slightest approximations of sitting quietly, walking beside her, and abstaining from biting and running away. She reinforced his target behaviors as frequently as every ten seconds.

The counselor began delivering these services on the carpet in her office, and within the first day, the student showed potential toward progress. As his screaming began to subside, she started having him walk quietly beside her for short distances in the hallway. Small increments of progress were slow but steady and always celebrated.

After two weeks, the counselor trained another employee with PCM certification to take her place in the intervention. During the next three weeks, Daniel was carefully and incrementally introduced to classroom participation, but always with the trained

shadow at his side literally every moment. Soon the shadow began fading some of her interventions and reducing the frequency of rewards to promote Daniel's self-direction and independent behavior management.

As a result of these educators' additional training, patience, huge blocks of time, and most of all their love and commitment to the child's development, today Daniel is sitting quietly in a regular education 5K classroom and progressing toward grade level academic targets. As it turned out, he had no learning disability. His behaviors were a result of his grossly under-developed social skills. And when those inappropriate and aggressive behaviors were patiently and lovingly shaped into compliance through positive reinforcement, he gained the skills to attend, to listen, to follow rules and procedures, and ultimately, to make academic progress.

As John so aptly pointed out in his interview, we can no longer simply place a student in an alternative setting saying "we can't do anything for this child." Daniel's success was constituted by educators who were properly trained in behavior theory and who were willing to use their skills to make a difference for him. The course of Daniel's life was altered dramatically because of the counselor's action and because the school was committed to do whatever it took to optimize the child's growth and development. The decision to assist students at their level of development and to provide proper support, strategies, and expertise for each child represented a redemptive rather than a punitive approach to the increasingly demanding work of principal leadership.

PART IV: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This study examined the following central and guiding questions:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management? Additional guiding questions:

1. What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

2. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

3. What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

Working from a constructivist worldview, the case study approach was appropriate for this research endeavor as it enriched my understanding of the lived experiences of participants within the context of their own school settings. This type of qualitative inquiry accommodated the interpretation of multiple participant meanings in three varied school settings and allowed me to construct theory to describe the phenomenon.

Data were collected in two elementary schools and one middle school during the months of January, February, and March of 2013. The participants' stories and descriptive language were coded and analyzed through the lenses of *narrative processes, language, and context of culture* (McCormick, 2000).

My intellectual goals were to construct substantial meaning through interactions with participants and enrich my insight and understanding of the role of principal leadership and school culture. Further, I examined how principal leadership and the application of behavior theory in daily practice shaped school cultures.

Elementary and middle school principal, teacher, and the behavior interventionist's perceptions were gathered through interview, observation, and focus groups.

PART V: MAJOR FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Participants

The study included two male principals and one female principal. Two of the administrators held doctorates and the other earned thirty hours above the degree of Master of Educational Administration. There were nine teacher informants with eight females and one male. Their total years of experience ranged from three to twenty-eight. Their positions included regular education (3), Montessori education (2), and special education (4) and grade levels ranging from first through eighth grade. One behavior interventionist with thirty-eight years of service participated in the research project.

Authenticity

The data collection process generated many ideas from the participants' stories, experiences, interpretations, and perceptions. The exchange of these ideas and perspectives in focus group discussions afforded the informants and me the opportunity to co-construct meaning from our experiences. We realized that our experiences and the process of meaning-making shaped our thinking and that our thinking determined our convictions about the power of leadership to shape culture and the impact of positive cultures on our own growth and development.

During the data transcriptions and later as I was writing the final chapters, I found myself steeped in subjectivity and reflexivity. Sifting through my field notes and voice recorder memos again and again and adding to them almost daily helped me reflect on

my own biases and predispositions. I ambled my way back to Peshkin's (1988) notion

that an inquirer's subjectivity or qualities "… have the capacity to filter, skew, shape,

block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research

project to its culmination in a written document" (p. 17). Having observed and

participated in a shift in the culture of my own school were a central part of my

subjectivity, and I attempted to balance the view from my experiential lens with the

perceptions of the participants.

I remembered Schwandt (2007) pointing out that "all accounts (in speech and

writing) are essentiality not just *about* something but are also *doing* something …

accounts do not simply represent some aspect of the world, but are in some way involved

in that world" (p. 260). He called the process *ontological* reflexivity and described it as

unavoidable.

Re-reading the transcriptions and my journal seemed to extend the feeling of

being in the field and undergirded what Schwandt referred to as "critically inspecting the

entire process" (p. 260). This reflexivity, when I embraced it with intentionality,

contributed to and enhanced the validity of the accounts and stories from this particular

social phenomenon.

In an effort to further safeguard the authenticity of the data, I referred to the

fairness, ontological, educative, and tactical criteria as set forth by Guba & Lincoln

(1989). Some of the most salient insights in a research study are garnered from the

discrepant data. Regarding fairness, the extent to which a researcher presents the various

perspectives and interpretations in a balanced fashion according to the authors, the

participants discussed their frustration over the negative attitudes of their colleagues and

lack of administrative support with children who required substantial intervention. In his struggle to embrace the redemptive model John protested, "Why should I reward a student for doing what he is supposed to do?" Thomas and Nathan concurred that the model was so contrary to their old paradigm of applying punitive measures and using coercive language to manage student behavior that the shift required serious reflection and intentional steps toward the application of the principles of behavior theory. And as iterated in Chapter Four, Thomas had yet to see evidence that the pivot technique worked.

I stated earlier that I had witnessed a positive cultural shift in my own school after implementing behavior theory as prescribed in the strategies of PCM and Behavior Tools. While the continental plates of our culture are shifting, there are landforms that remain static. We have not provided training for every employee, and some of these individuals cling to a more punitive model of behavior management.

Jessica, Rachael, and Ross had questions regarding specific responses to students in particular situations and about how those responses mapped on to school protocols. Our discussions led to what they described as a more informed perspective of behavior theory and a renewed confidence in their daily practice. These comments are examples of the ontological impact of having participated in the study. Their notions could be applied to criterion of tactical authenticity, as these participants described an empowerment to act with elevated levels of poise and self-assurance.

Participants commented on the opportunity to speak openly in the exchange of ideas that took place in the focus group sessions. Particularly, they expressed an appreciation and deeper understanding of the perspective of other practitioners. They suggested that because so much of the work of teaching is done in isolation, it was

refreshing and enlightening to listen to others and to be given a voice among their peers.

I believe this evidence speaks to the educative value of participation in the focus group

portion of the study.

It is rare that one model fits every circumstance or application. While the skills

and strategies of PCM and Behavior Tools are imperfect, they appear to be adequate

approximations for effective behavior management and the affirmation of appropriate

behaviors. The evidence from the participants' perspectives suggested that their

application of behavior theory and intentionally and systematically changing their own

behaviors were making a positive difference in students' social and academic growth.

It was in the midst of this reflexive process and the consideration of the discrepant

data that the overarching themes began to present themselves more clearly. Analyzing

and synthesizing the accounts brought to light not only the three prominent themes but

also an associated administrative challenge for each of those themes. I elected to address

the theme that emerged from each guiding question together with its associated challenge

for the principal. The themes and challenges identified in this study were presented in

Figure 5.1.

Themes	Challenges
Theme One – Changing adult behaviors	Challenge One – Maximizing positive engagements
Theme Two – Shaping Positive Cultures	Challenge Two – Meeting behavior needs in a changing society
Theme Three – Preserving the dignity of each child	Challenge Three – Embracing a redemptive paradigm

Figure 5.1: Themes and Challenges

Research Question One: What are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence

positive school cultures?

Challenge One: Maximizing positive engagements.

Principals reported their perceptions of the most important and influential

attitudes and behaviors that shaped school cultures. Their list included a calm demeanor,

modeling or leading by example, communication, and respect. Teachers agreed with

principals on two points: communication and modeling or leading by example. They

added other behaviors and attitudes they felt influenced the atmosphere of their schools:

positive reinforcement, support, feedback, and confidentiality. The interventionist

commented several times in focus groups that leading by example was most important in

shaping positive school cultures. He referred to the behavior as being "willing to roll up

your sleeves" and work with teachers to support the needs of each child. See Figure 5.2

for a comparison of the perceptions of principals and teachers on attitudes that shaped

school culture.

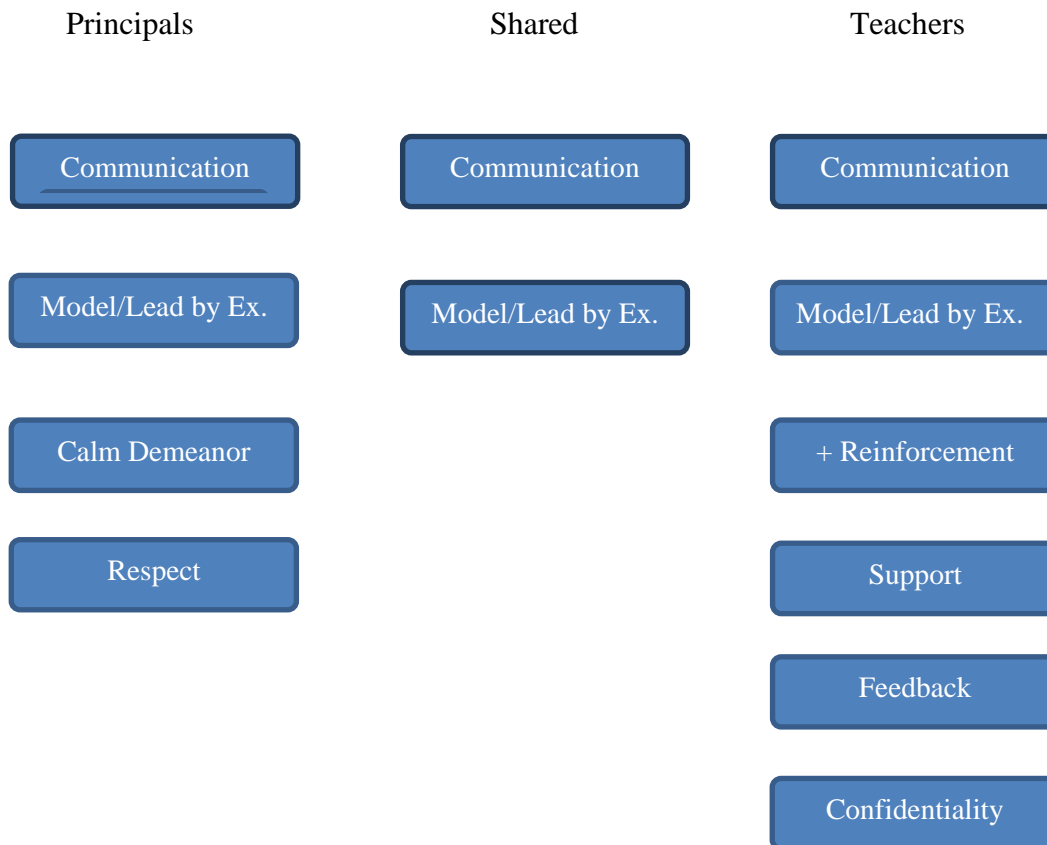| Principals	Shared	Teachers
Communication	Communication	Communication
Model/Lead by Ex.	Model/Lead by Ex.	Model/Lead by Ex.
Calm Demeanor		+ Reinforcement
Respect		Support
		Feedback
		Confidentiality

Figure 5.2 Principal Behaviors and Attitudes that Shape Cultures

Teachers, principals, and the interventionist all agreed that the influence of the principal or leader in any organization may be more powerful than we realized. John reflected on his influence and referred to it as "scary." Teachers made statements like "it all has to start at the top" or they pointed out what a difference their principal's positive engagements with students and staff had made on the overall atmosphere of the school. They characterized this difference as a shift toward a more positive culture.

The participants' thoughts on the power of principal leadership to influence environments aligned with Kouzes & Posner's (2010) first and most fundamental truth about leadership, namely, *you make a difference*. Their research, conducted over thirty

years, indicated that believing you can have a positive influence on people is where true leadership begins.

Goleman & Boyatzis (2008) cited new discoveries from the field of social neuroscience: the study of what happens to the brain when people interact. They referred to the phenomenon as *social intelligence* and reported that effective leadership was "less about mastering situations – or even mastering social skill sets – than about developing a genuine interest in and talent for fostering positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need" (p. 2).

The data are convincing that the leader can deliberately choose certain behaviors and attitudes that shape positive feelings and inspire people to vigorous action and commitment toward organizational goals and responsibilities. Social intelligence, according to Goleman &Boyatzis (2008), is relationship-based and promotes "interpersonal competencies … that inspire others to be effective" (p. 2). They referred to one's *social circuitry:* the scientific language for what happens to brains when people interact. They asserted, "The only way to develop your social circuitry is to undertake the hard work of changing your behavior" (p. 5).

Interview data revealed that the behavior of communication, with its specific components of listening and empathy, was mentioned first and with higher frequency by the teachers. Neuroscience, as reported by Goleman & Boyatzis, called this interaction the *biology of leadership* and they placed empathy as the first and most central component of socially intelligent leadership. The other core indicators were attunement, organizational awareness, influence, developing others, inspiration, and teamwork.

The teacher's second most frequently mentioned principal attribute or behavior was modeling or leading by example. Principals and the interventionist shared the belief that administrators were most effective in inspiring others to action when they modeled behaviors and attitudes, or as John put it, when they led "with muddy boots."

Thomas associated the act of "growing alongside the teachers" with modeling, and John confessed that, "You know I can't say to teachers… I want you to treat your students with respect, not use coercives, etc., but at the same time I'm operating completely different opposite from that. Um, I've got to model that for teachers and students. I just think that can't be over-stated … how we as leaders (principals and teachers) how we respond to others is crucial."

Teachers posited that principals should be "out there … interacting with kids." When discussing the management of difficult behaviors, Jessica and Hanna both expressed their strong desire for principals to "come in here (classroom) and show me what you want." All the teacher participants indicated that leaders found favor in their sight when they were visible, engaged, and when they interacted positively with students and adults. They used phrases like "walk the talk" and "set the example."

Ruth and Charlotte appeared inspired by how their principal embraced change in his own life by modeling positive engagements with students. Ross, when discussing his principal's modeling, offered, "And that has an imprint on my professional life back in class … I carry that back in class …." All respondents shared some acknowledgement of the value of modeling behaviors and attitudes that contributed to positive cultures.

Another core component of the socially intelligent leader was the act of developing others. Coaching and mentoring are elements of modeling, and when done

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with compassion and personal and professional investment, respondents agreed that modeling inspired others toward higher levels of effectiveness. Kouzes & Posner (2010) insisted that *you either lead by example or you don't lead at all.* They contended that keeping promises, modeling values, and being out front leading the way with action made lasting impressions on followers. Thomas espoused the idea of admitting mistakes and sharing his own struggles with his staff. Ruth was so enthralled by the principal's willingness to confess the challenges he faced in changing his own behaviors that she became tearful as she recounted the incident.

Principals referred to a calm demeanor and an attitude of respect as imperative for the leader's effectiveness. Rebecca noted that when principals treated employees fairly and consistently and teachers knew she (principal) would never disrespect them, then they had a confidence in the leader even if difficult issues arose. John reported that treating people with respect was a non-negotiable and encouraged his staff regularly to make sure that everyone who entered the building would be treated with respect.

Teachers associated respect with positive reinforcement. Many times they spoke of how much it meant to them to have "a pat on the back" or when their administrator came by the classroom daily to check on them and to ask if they needed anything. When leaders acknowledged personal matters like births, deaths, or weddings or other family celebrations, teachers expressed feelings of being cared for and affirmed. For them, simple expressions of care and other "little things" that demonstrated interest brought on feelings of worth and a sense of validation. John said after a follow up conversation with a teacher where he praised her for an outstanding lesson, "I can't tell you how much that meant to her."

I was reminded by these participants how much the "little things" meant in promoting peaceful and caring workplaces. The data suggest that an organizational environment that is characterized by respect, support, affirmation, empathy, and positive engagement encourages and inspires effort and contribution. Again, Covey's research reiterated that the level of investment was proportionate to how people were treated. Principals would do well to remember that the simplest notion of treating others like you want to be treated is paramount to inspiring commitment and investment.

Goleman & Boyatzis (2008) called behaviors like listening attentively and the outward expressions of care and concern *attunement*, and asked the question, "Are you attuned to the feelings and moods of others" (p. 5)? Collins (2001) echoed that sentiment stating that Level V leaders consistently gave explicit credit to others for their contributions to the organization. Another truth about leadership from Kouzes & Posner (2010) was *leadership is an affair of the heart*. Making people feel their worth in the eyes of the leader along with displays of appreciation were powerful motivators for employees. These researchers confirmed that genuine love for others was the heart of leadership.

In summary, there was general accord among the informants regarding communication, leading by example, respect, and reinforcement as having a positive influence on school culture. It was interesting to note that the behaviors the principals said they needed to engage in more often were to communicate appreciation and interact positively with teachers – the very things teachers said they desired the most.

Having established that principal behaviors and attitudes appear to shape the school culture, the challenge for the administrator aligned with Question One addressed

the issue of determining if one's influence would be positive or negative or maximizing the number and quality of positive engagements. I contended that meeting this challenge was a simple matter of intentionality or choice. Goleman & Boyatzis (2008) reminded us that changing one's behavior was hard work that sometimes required training. From my own experience and from my fieldwork in the research settings, I suggested that additional training in behavior theory, and in our case specifically PCM and Behavior Tools, created a sharper awareness and sensitivity about the environment and made the most impact in shaping adult behaviors and increasing the number of positive engagements with students, teachers, and staff.

Research Question Two: In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

Challenge Two: Meeting the behavioral needs of students in a changing society

As stated in Chapter One, educators are faced with an increasing number of students with autism or children who have been abused and/or neglected. Often these students arrive in our schools with under-developed social skills. Without the most basic social skills, these children have little opportunity for academic growth and development even in classrooms and school environments that are exceptionally conducive to learning.

At some point in their careers all the teachers in the study had experienced students whose behaviors were so aggressive and disruptive that teaching was nearly impossible. They expressed feelings of frustration, anxiety, and even fear that the student would hurt himself or someone else. Nathan, the interventionist, recalled having assisted children who exhibited continuous, high-magnitude disruption, aggression, or self-injury in every school in the district. As often as it was feasible, he provided one-on-one

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interventions with the students to allow the teacher the opportunity to teach the rest of the class.

In nearly every case, these students' behaviors were shaped into compliance through the interventions. The teachers expressed huge relief to have the support they needed in their classrooms. In each situation, the intervention was systematically faded, and the behavior management for the child was slowly relinquished back to the classroom teacher.

This process of shaping student behaviors is more likely when adults have undergone extensive additional training in behavior theory. The skills and strategies learned in PCM and Behavior Tools training are requisite to managing these difficult and sometimes extreme behaviors. This research study argued that the key to this kind of success was found in the newly acquired adult behaviors such as non-reactive responses, positive reinforcement, reward systems, increasing positive engagements, eliminating coercive language, relationship building, and the notion that every inappropriate behavior is an opportunity to teach new and more socially accepted behaviors.

The stories of Brian and Daniel were relevant to Question Two and the associated challenge as they represented one extreme case and one that was somewhat more moderate in nature. Regardless of the circumstances that precipitated their conditions, these difficult cases were managed to successful conclusions by highly trained and skillful educators who were willing to accept their responsibility to meet the needs of each child in their school.

While Brian and Daniel represented some of the most challenging circumstances, the findings of this study asserted that these same behavior management skills were

effective with other students. While training in PCM equips the educator with the

knowledge and skills to manage even the most aggressive behaviors, the foundational

emphasis of both PCM and Behavior Tools is on prevention. I suggested that principals

and teachers refine the skills and strategies of behavior theory and shift their own

behaviors to maximize positive engagements, strengthen relationships, commit to non-

reactive responses, and in every way preserve the dignity of the child.

Changing adult behaviors through additional training in behavior theory seemed

to have shaped school cultures and set optimal conditions for student success. This

conclusion was substantiated by the work of Deal & Peterson (2009) who posited that

shaping school culture is the heart of leadership. In the midst of decades of outside-in

approaches to school reform and accountability, these researchers advocated for an

inside-out model whereby educators transformed their skills to embrace the challenges of

today's society. They assimilated six functions of school culture that supported the

findings of this study. These functions or impacts indicated that culture 1) fosters school

effectiveness and productivity, 2) improves collegiality, collaboration, and

communication, 3) promotes innovation and school improvement, 4) builds commitment

and kindles motivation, 5) amplifies the energy and vitality of school staff, students, and

community, and 6) focuses attention on what is important and valued (pp. 12-14).

The results of this inquiry confirmed that meeting the behavioral needs and

challenges of today's society required additional training that changed adult behaviors.

This shift in adult behaviors appeared to have shaped learning environments that

stimulated school cultures toward social and academic success. This relationship

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between principal and teacher behaviors, learning environments, and cultures of learning was illustrated in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Changing Adult Behaviors

Research Question Three: What is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

Challenge Three: Embracing a redemptive paradigm

The data from this research signified that the combined impact of principal leadership and behavior training resulted in a shift toward a more positive school culture that enhanced learning. The descriptors of school culture from Chapter One were noteworthy here and contained words like attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, rituals, norms, language, values, goals, and practices. These values and behaviors define an organization and are casually spoken of as simply "the way we do things around here."

The literature on culture referred to the leader as the most influential contributor to the organization. Recall the language from Deal & Peterson (1990) that described the multiple roles of the principal: the principal is identified as the cultural leader that not

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only manages operations, but one that "acts as a symbol, a potter, a poet, an actor, and a healer in the school environment" (p.3).

Thomas described how leadership, culture, and the application of behavior theory had shaped the very core of his organization. He recognized the value and necessity of making each day count. He offered these sentiments with a measure of confidence, "Oh, I think definitely … certainly that training (PCM and Behavior Tools) has and is impacting me um, and I think that as we shape our culture, we try to do it consistently every day. It's kind of like you tell them (students) you don't get days back in the classroom … well, we don't get days back either …"

Jessica tied together the constructs of principal leadership and behavior theory with these thoughts, "I think when you have the knowledge of PCM and you understand the positive reinforcement, the relationships, the behavior tools … you have the support from your leadership, you have the good communication, the good relationship that comes from using it, your school culture is going to change."

Of the guiding principles of PCM and Behavior Tools, two were most important for this study. The first and foundational component was strengthening relationships. Taking the time to get to know students, their interests and aspirations, to listen with empathy, to provide consistent support and genuine care built trust and created a level of security and a confidence for risk-taking and investment. Maximizing relationships was the on-going and value-laden process of which Thomas spoke when he said, "you don't get days back."

Unfortunately, the breach of trust in a relationship was equally powerful. Thomas was willing to speak openly about the damage to his relationships with a couple of

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students who were placed in an alternative setting for disciplinary reasons. Regarding his negative engagement, he said, "I know that I will have to start over relationship wise with some kids when they come back from over there … or you never start over … its' just gone, it's out of the box and you don't get it put back in so …." And Nathan articulated his thoughts on the escalation-reintegration process, "And I didn't realize I was the one escalating it. The adult … when I figured that out … it changed my whole life … I was the one doing it, it wasn't the kid, it was me!"

Another guiding principle of behavior theory was reinforcement – the notion that when appropriate behaviors are positively reinforced, they are more likely to occur in the future. So when teachers and administrators spent their time positively reinforcing appropriate behaviors rather than giving negative attention to inappropriate behaviors, the culture seemed to undergo the beginnings of change: the shift away from a negative or toxic environment toward a more positive culture that appeared better suited for learning and social development.

An important step in Question 3 and the Challenge aligned with it involved a decision, a choice to adopt a redemptive model. A major part of the shift in culture required a choice to embrace this crucial determination. Understanding this redemptive model required a discussion about what I called the *reintegration cycle*. Students perform best when they are in stable functioning, a stage where their behavior is on task, their thinking is reasonable, their feelings are appropriate, and their physiology is relaxed. This stage of functioning optimizes the ability to acquire and apply knowledge, to connect ideas, to synthesize, to evaluate, and ultimately to maximize learning. This is the stage on the PCM crisis continuum where the conditions are set for the most effective

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teaching and learning.

When something interrupts the stage of stable functioning, the student may become frustrated, agitated, or angry, and begin to escalate. These are stressful emotions, and according to Goleman & Boyatzis (2008), "surges in the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol strongly affect reasoning and cognition (p. 6)" creating conditions where the ability to learn is greatly diminished.

Teachers and administrators can respond to this escalation in at least two ways. They can participate in the negative behavior with reactive responses or with coercive language, for example. Or they can use the strategies and skills from behavior theory to de-escalate the situation. When the strategies are executed effectively, the student can be reintegrated to task very quickly. Figure 5.4 illustrated the cycle.
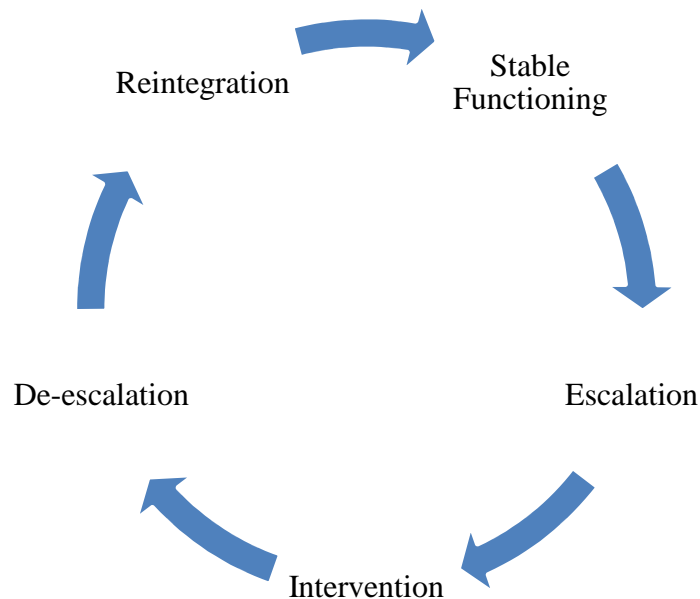

Figure 5.4 Reintegration Cycle

It is helpful to realize that the reintegration cycle can take place in a matter seconds, minutes, or an hour or more depending on the response of the adult. This study showed that where relationships of trust existed in which adults exercised the strategies and behaviors of PCM and Behavior Tools, the reintegration cycle was shortened or minimized. All participants agreed that maximizing instructional minutes was a primary goal and that their behaviors and strategies accelerated the reintegration cycle and enabled students to return quickly to stable functioning and the tasks of learning.

Understanding that adult behaviors and responses to situations can accelerate the reintegration cycle and assist students back to task is imperative in maximizing teaching and learning. Pledging to behave according to our values, however, is always a matter of choice. The third truth about leadership presented by Kouzes & Posner (2010) was *values drive commitment.* Their research specified forging "alignments between personal values and organizational demands" (p. xxii). The findings in this research pointed again to the choice of a punitive or a redemptive model. Applying the disciplinary rule is easy, but is it what you believe, does it align with the organizational demand of maximizing teaching and learning, and does it set the optimal conditions for social growth and development?

All participants in the study demonstrated a commitment to a redemptive model. Their decisions required a change in their thinking and a calculated shift away from a comfortable paradigm. Some described times of struggle over the shift to a redemptive paradigm or an internal debate about some of the PCM and Behavior Tools strategies. Thomas, for example, disputed, "I still don't see evidence that the pivot works." And Jessica shared how she could "see both sides" of the decision toward a redemptive model.

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The findings from Question Three suggested that the combined impact of principal leadership, behavior theory, and school culture involved a commitment to preserving the dignity of each child, and in order to make such a promise, one must align his or her behaviors with what is valued. In this case, increasing positive engagements, reinforcement, exercising respect in all encounters, strengthening relationships, building trust, and honoring the dignity of others were among the values with which participants wanted to align their behaviors.

I proposed a conceptual framework that illuminated these findings. Educators may exercise their power of choice to embrace a redemptive or punitive construct from which to interact with adults and students. The punitive pathway is characterized by negative engagement and negative consequences that produce little change in future behavior. I designated the punitive model ineffective as it contributed to a negative or toxic culture.

The redemptive approach is defined by positive engagements and positive reinforcements that were more likely to produce appropriate behaviors in the future and to preserve dignity. I summited that the redemptive model appeared more effective as it fostered a positive culture. Figure 5.5 illustrated the conceptual frame.
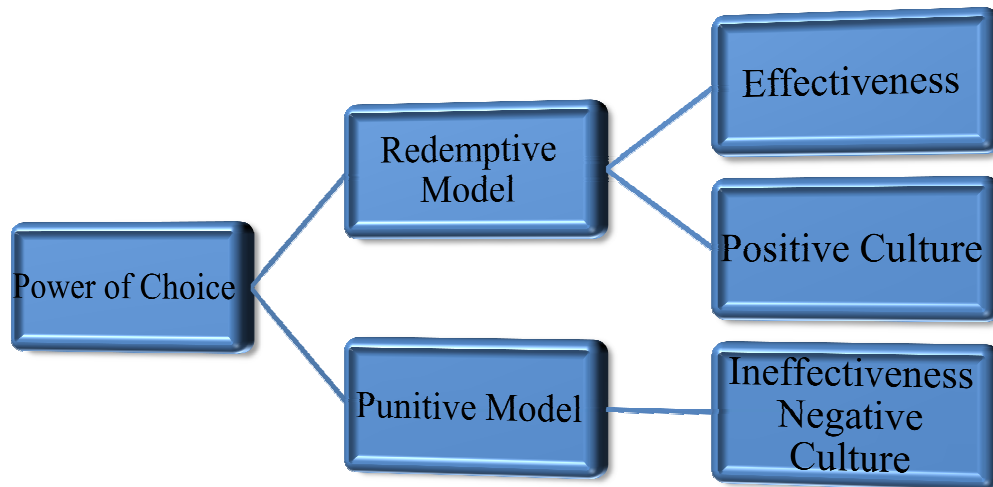
Figure 5.5: Redemptive vs. Punitive Model

Summary

Informants agreed on the following principal behaviors and attitudes that contributed to positive school cultures: communication, leading by example, respect, and positive reinforcement. These findings aligned with the literature (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2010) and the guiding principles and strategies of the Professional Crisis Management and Behavior Tools systems. There was consensus among the participants that individuals could choose behaviors and attitudes that shaped school cultures and in doing so, they promoted environments that supported social and academic development.

The findings of this study confirmed that principal leadership held a powerful influence on school cultures and that administrators and teachers could exercise their power of choice as to whether that influence was positive or negative. I proposed that without extensive additional training in behavior theory, educators were ill-equipped to

manage the challenging behaviors in today's changing society and to adequately reinforce appropriate behaviors. The participants concurred that their training in PCM and Behavior Tools heightened their awareness and activated them toward change in their own behaviors. These new adult behaviors began to shape a more positive culture in their schools.

This inquiry supported the literature suggesting that positive school cultures fostered teaching and learning (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The data from this study advocated that changing adult behaviors through intentional choice and additional training in behavior theory shaped school cultures and helped set the conditions for student success. The findings confirmed that a relationship existed between principal and teacher behaviors and the application of behavior theory to enhance cultures of learning.

The data from Question 3 indicated that the combined impact of principal leadership and behavior training resulted in a shift toward a more positive school culture that enhanced learning. The study contributed to the literature that placed the principal as the most influential contributor to school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009). The findings from Question 3 also called on educators to commit to preserving the dignity of each child and challenged them to exercise their power of choice to embrace a redemptive paradigm in their interactions and responses in behavioral management.

There were no previous studies that examined the relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and a school-wide implementation of PCM. According to the literature and the data collected for this study, a gap continues to exist in what is known about the phenomenon. However, this study revealed that educators in one South Carolina school district were working to bridge that gap.

PART V: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION AND FURTHER STUDY

Findings for this inquiry were based on data collected through interviews and focus groups from informants in a district-wide implementation of PCM and Behavior Tools. This qualitative methodology provided for rich discussion, reflection, and the co-construction of meaning from lived experiences. The findings suggested the following recommendations for action.

Recommendations for Training and Decision-Making:

Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that additional training in behavior theory, specifically PCM and Behavior Tools, be considered for school leaders, teachers, and staff members. It was further recommended that school districts and universities partner to provide this training for teacher candidates before they begin their student teaching experience.

It was recommended that school administrators, especially principals, lead the way in decision-making toward a redemptive response to student behavior and strive diligently toward shaping school culture through relationship building, increasing the frequency and quality of positive engagements, reinforcement, and preserving the dignity of each child.

Recommendations for Further Study:

The study was the first of its kind and was designed to investigate the relationship between principal leadership, school culture, and Professional Crisis Management. This research hardly scratched the surface of the topic's potential. I recommended a comparative case study that examined educators with additional training in behavior theory and those without. It would benefit the educational community to see

comparisons of how quality instructional minutes were maximized, the number of discipline referrals, the frequency of positive vs. negative engagements, and the academic performance of students exposed to positive vs. toxic learning environments. It was further recommended that certain segments or populations of society could be studied to expose inequities or injustices. For example, do school administrators engage differently with African American males than they do with other segments of society?

I proposed the value and potential in conducting a study on the concept of social intelligence as suggested by Goleman & Boyatzis (2008). Again, comparisons could be drawn on the social intelligence of administrators and teachers with and without additional behavior training and the specific actions and attitudes that inspire others toward effectiveness. I signified that opportunities abounded for longitudinal examinations of student performance in schools and districts where behavior theory or social intelligence strategies had been deployed.

PART VI: POTENTIAL LARGER AUDIENCE

As indicated in Chapter Three, I had a discussion with State Superintendent of Education, Mick Zais, regarding the need for additional training in behavior theory when he visited my school in 2011. I participated with Neal Flesig in presentations to the Western Piedmont Education Consortium Special Education Directors and to officials at the South Carolina Department of Education. While further conversations at the regional and state levels would be appropriate, I proposed that speaking directly with district superintendents and school principals about the difference behavior training can make on school cultures would have merit as well.

I was invited to present a seminar on behavior management with the student teachers and education department faculty at a local college in March of 2013. The response and feedback from the student teachers and their professor indicated that these students had little to no exposure to the concepts and strategies of behavior theory as applied through PCM and Behavior Tools. I proposed teacher preparation program faculty members as a potential audience for a discussion of the findings of this study.

I suggested that caregivers and staff members from churches, child development centers, after-school programs, YMCA's, foster care, and summer camps would benefit from training in PCM and Behavior Tools. Finally, parenting skills would be greatly enhanced if parents and guardians were exposed to the concepts and strategies contained in these systems.

PART VII: CONCLUSION

The redemptive model is not merely a matter of intellectual choice but one of moral responsibility. I opened Chapter Five with a quote from Parker Palmer (2007). I adhered to this notion that *we teach who we are*, and I associated it with my subjectivity in the study. As Peshkin pointed out, "… one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed" (p.17). The results of this study asserted that *who we are* is also a fabric from which children learn, a wardrobe with which they aspire to dress themselves. Therefore, the power of our influence as educational leaders should not be under-estimated. It would behoove us to strive diligently toward more of who we are becoming because children are looking to us as models of learning, behavior, and character. Every encounter is a gift especially when you consider that often the children with whom we least desire to work are the very students who need us the most.

It is our task and responsibility to be as equipped as possible to provide the care and support children and families need. Society is changing constantly, and educators are obliged to prepare themselves to meet the challenges and needs of students where they are. The interventionist and I sought PCM instructor certification and advocated for a school-wide and now a district-wide implementation of crisis management training and implementation. The results of those efforts seemed to influence positive culture shifts in the schools in this research study. My conversations with participants and my reflection on the endeavors toward positive cultures in these schools evolved into a model that summarized the findings of this research study.

I proposed a leadership – culture continuum comprised of two options for the administrator to prepare to meet the needs of our current society and to set the conditions for optimal social and academic growth. School leaders make choices every day regarding the types of engagements and encounters they experience with others. Choosing negative interactions and negative reinforcement creates stress for staff members and their anxiety, as the participants agreed, "… trickles down to students." The result was a punitive model characterized by high stress, low trust environments that disrupted social and academic development and perpetuated a toxic school culture.

Educators who embraced a more redemptive paradigm and elected to increase the number and quality of their positive engagements developed and nurtured high trust, low stress environments that promoted social and academic growth. Referring again to Deal & Peterson (2009), the positive school culture created by these adult decisions and behaviors "fosters school effectiveness and productivity … and amplifies the energy and

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vitality of the school staff, students, and community" (p. 12-13). Figure 5.6 was designed to illustrate this Leadership – Culture Continuum.

+ Interaction + Reinforcement Redemptive	High Trust Low Stress Environments	Promotes Social Academic Development	Positive School Culture

Leadership Behaviors

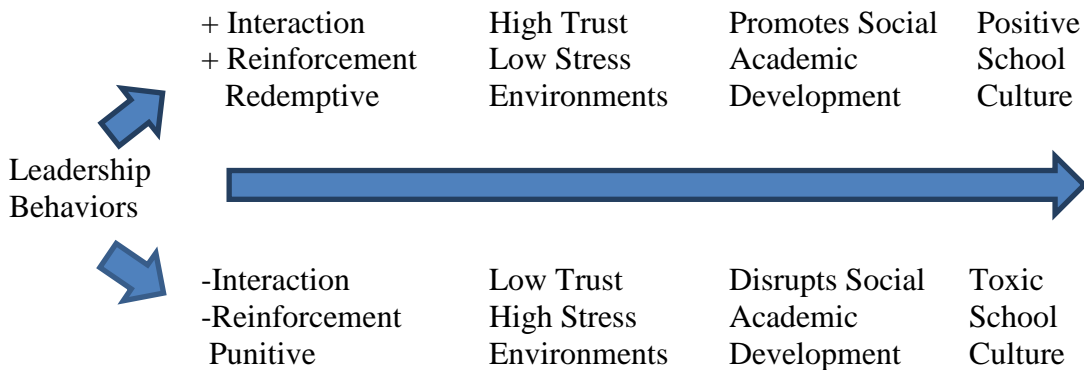|			
-Interaction -Reinforcement Punitive	Low Trust High Stress Environments	Disrupts Social Academic Development	Toxic School Culture

Figure 5.6: Leadership - Culture Continuum

One final thought. I was reminded of examples from athletic and music performances. While standing on the free throw line in the final seconds with the game in your hands or approaching the most difficult passage in a concert in front of a packed house, athletes and musicians must be able to focus, put the crowd out of their minds, and perform at their highest possible level. Under the tension and stress of low trust, toxic environments, teachers may bring something less than the best of who they are to children regardless of how hard they may work. Conversely, high trust, low stress cultures and positive, affirming leader behaviors can allow teachers to exhale, relax their shoulders, and be the very best of who they are for the students under their care.

The second option on the continuum is to choose positive engagements and go about affirming others to create environments of support, nurture, and collaboration. Adherence to this more redemptive paradigm appeared to have produced high trust, low

stress environments, promoted social and academic development, and ultimately

stimulated a shift toward more positive school cultures.

EPILOGUE

In the first day of my initial training as a Level II PCM Practitioner in 2007, I realized that the specific skills and strategies contained in the system were exactly what our staff and I needed to meet the behavior challenges we faced. I made a decision that day to seek instructor certification. It was a selfish act on my part because I was thinking only of my school. Little did I know that our school-wide implementation would become the model for the district.

After the first group of our teachers and staff were trained, other employees in the building immediately began to ask if they could be trained. One teacher said, "I feel inadequate. My partner has these skills that I don't have, and I want them!" And as more teachers were trained in the first couple of years, I sensed a shifting in our culture. The common language of positive reinforcement, pivot, and praise statements began to permeate our building. This increase in positive engagements with students seemed to strengthen relationships and trust among teachers and children. In a school culture that was already calm and respectful, we noticed the impact of these behaviors, skills, and tools, and most importantly, we were becoming more intentional about honoring the dignity of each child in every situation.

This shift in our behaviors brought about a change in our thinking as well. There was a move away from the old paradigm, a punitive model, to a more redemptive response to student behavior. The old paradigm held that when a student behaved inappropriately, punitive measures were applied. In other words, misbehavior was met

with the application of disciplinary action, the taking away of privileges, or the assignment to in-school or out-of-school suspension. These disciplinary responses are necessary at times, of course, but they are ineffective generally because they do little to change future behavior.

We discovered that not only were we better equipped in managing severe problem behaviors, but we saw reductions in behaviors across the whole spectrum from the mildest to the most disruptive. As we utilized prevention strategies, positive reinforcement, de-escalation techniques, and honored the dignity of each child, we noticed the emergence of the reintegration cycle. And as we held to our moral obligation to preserving dignity through a redemptive paradigm, we felt a shift toward a more positive culture. While we have a long way to go toward any satisfactory level of effectiveness, we are becoming more intentional about adult behaviors and attitudes that foster social and academic growth and development.

> *The core leadership challenge of the coming decades is to build*
>
> *schools in which every child can grow and every teacher can*
>
> *make a difference. Such sentiments flourish in a culture where*
>
> *learning and caring are valued and where stories, rituals, and*
>
> *ceremonies provide zest and buoyancy to the world's most*
>
> *sacred profession. School leaders can make a difference by*
>
> *restoring hope, faith, and a shared spirit in the place called school.*

Deal & Peterson, *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls, Paradoxes, and Promises*, 2009

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

University of South Carolina - The Department of Educational Leadership and Policies
INFORMATION DOCUMENT FOR NON-MEDICAL RESEARCH

Principal Leadership and School Culture with a School-Wide
Implementation of Professional Crisis Management

Principle Investigator: Mark Thomas Adams

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Ph. D. candidate, Mark Thomas Adams, from the University of South Carolina. Your participation is voluntary. Please review the information included in this document. You may decide to discuss your decision to participate with family and friends.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management (PCM). This study will contribute to the existing literature on principal leadership and school culture. The selection of Laurens County School District 55 represents a rare phenomenon in research as it is the only district in South Carolina to pursue a full implementation of PCM.

Printing, signing and returning this document will constitute your consent to participate in this research project. You will be given a copy of this document.

_____   _____
Print Name (Participant)   Signature   Date

Mark Thomas Adams   _____
Researcher   Signature   Date

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to be interviewed and observed and to participate in a focus group of your peers. You will be asked questions and given the opportunity to discuss the relationship between principal leadership and school culture and your experiences and perceptions regarding teaching and learning environments within the construct of PCM implementation.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no anticipated risks to your participation. If you feel some discomfort in responding to a question, you may skip the question.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

You will not benefit directly from participating in the study. The overall goal is to reveal the experiences of teachers and administrators within the context of leadership, culture, and the implementation of PCM. The findings may provide insight and understanding of the nature of the relationship between leadership, culture, and PCM that will benefit other schools and districts and contribute to the literature. As a result, your understanding of theory and practice may be strengthened.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive any payment or compensation for your participation in this research study.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As the principle investigator, I do not have any financial interest in the sponsor or the product being studied.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The information collected about you will be coded with a pseudonym or initials or numbers, for example abc–123, etc. The data that have your identifiable information will be kept separately from the rest of your file. The data will be stored in the investigator's office in a locked file cabinet/password protected computer. The data will be stored for approximately seven years after the study is completed and then destroyed.

Your consent will be asked for audio/video recording. You may decline this request. The principle investigator will transcribe the recordings and provide you a copy of the transcripts upon your request. You have a right to review and edit the recordings. Sentences that you ask the investigator to leave out will not be used and will be erased from all relevant documents.

When the results are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that will reveal your identity. If photographs, video or audio recordings of you will be used for educational purposes, your identity will be protected and disguised.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Also, you may refuse to answer any question about which you are reluctant and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

Your alternative to participation is not to participate.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to speak with someone independent of the researcher to obtain answers to questions about the research, please contact the University of South Carolina Department of Educational Leadership and Policies at 803.777.7000 or visit the web site: http://www.ed.sc.edu/edlp/

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact the Principle Investigator, Ph. D. Candidate, Mark Thomas Adams or Faculty Advisor, Dr. J. Lynn Harrill.

Ph. D. Candidate	Faculty Advisor
University of South Carolina	University of South Carolina
Educational Leadership and Policies	Educational Leadership and Policies
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APPENDIX B

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Characteristics of leader
2. Describe your school culture
3. Much of this research study focuses on principal leadership. I would be interested in knowing your thoughts on the value/influence, both positive and negative, of principal leadership.

4. More specifically, what are your opinions about the influence of principal leadership on school culture?

5. I would like to understand your practice of the Professional Crisis Management system. Please take me back to your initial certification and highlight your most significant experiences (positive and negative).

6. What is the value, if any, of a school-wide implementation of PCM for students and staff?

7. Please describe situations, if any, where a PCM certified principal made a difference (positively or negatively) in the decision-making process for a child's immediate or long term needs/treatment? A non-certified principal?

8. Escalation – De-escalation – Reintegration Cycle? The paradigm shift from punitive to positive/redemptive? Definition of discipline – to teach. Can you actually shape the course of a child's life? Preserving the dignity of the child.

9. How has your understanding of principal leadership and school culture within the construct of a school-wide implementation of PCM influenced your professional practice? Your personal life?

10. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1990), school culture is that "intangible feel of a school" that can be sensed when one enters the building. Please describe your sensory notions of classroom learning environments that may be influenced by the implementation of PCM as well as the School-wide culture.

11. Would you describe some moments in time when you felt very negatively or positively about your school's culture. Why?

12. In what ways, if any, is your classroom environment/culture different than it was 5 years ago? Your engagement with students? Student responses to you?

13. Regarding the three components of this research study, i.e., principal leadership, school culture, and PCM, in what ways, if any, have your school's culture changed for the better or worse?

14. Is there anything that we have not addressed that you feel is important/relevant to this study?

Art, music, poetry, writing, stories, interpretations, reflections – may be submitted any time by email, phone, text.

APPENDIX C

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Q1 - What leadership actions/behaviors help create a sense of trust, safety, support, and affirmation and how do those actions/behaviors influence your physiology?

Q2 - What, if any, additional training do administrators and teachers require to meet the needs of today's students?

Research Project working title:

Principal Leadership, School Culture, and Behavior Theory:
A Redemptive vs. Punitive Model

Central Research Question:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

Additional supporting questions are:

1. According to all participants, what are the characteristics of positive school cultures?

2. According to the three principals and the interventionist, what are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

3. According to the teachers, what were the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

4. In what ways, if any, are students behaving in the stable functioning stage of the crisis continuum and student on-task minutes influenced by principal leadership, school culture and the implementation of PCM?

5. In what ways, if any, do principal leadership and PCM shape adult behaviors?

6. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

7. What did the thirteen participants say was the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Q1 - WPEC Principals assemble twice a year for a full day of professional development in Greenwood … Given the opportunity to address this group of administrators, what would you like to say to them about leadership, culture, behavior theory, and setting the conditions/environment for optimal social and academic success?

Q2 - What leadership actions/behaviors help create a sense of trust, safety, support, and affirmation and how do those actions/behaviors influence your physiology?

Q3 - What, if any, additional training do administrators and teachers require to meet the needs of today's students?

Research Project working title:

Principal Leadership, School Culture, and Behavior Theory:

A Redemptive vs. Punitive Model

Central Research Question:

What is the nature of the relationship between principal leadership and school culture within a school-wide implementation of Professional Crisis Management?

Additional supporting questions are:

1. According to all participants, what are the principal attitudes and behaviors that influence positive school cultures?

2. In what ways, if any, does the shaping of adult behaviors influence classroom and school cultures that promote learning?

3. According to all participants, what is the combined impact, if any, of the constructs of principal leadership and PCM on the school culture?

APPENDIX E

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Continuous aggression: Repeated demonstrations of behaviors that is potentially injurious to others. Examples include continuous hitting, biting, kicking, head butting, or use of any other part of the body or an object to injure another person.

Continuous high magnitude disruption: Repeated demonstration of behaviors that are potentially damaging to the environment. Examples include throwing or toppling heavy objects such as chairs, tables, fire extinguishers, etc. Pencil tapping, paper throwing, book dropping, food throwing, etc., are not examples of high magnitude disruption. Similarly, damage to property does not constitute high magnitude disruptive behavior.

Continuous self-injury: Repeated demonstration of behaviors that is potentially injurious to oneself. Examples include head banging, face slapping, eye pocking, etc.

Crisis: Continuous aggression, and/or continuous self-injury, and/or continuous high-magnitude disruption. Individually, these can be referred to as crisis behaviors.

Extinction: Planned or spontaneous ignoring of junk behavior.

Fade: Systematically removing prompts in order to promote independent responding.

Junk Behavior: Behavior that is annoying but not harmful or illegal that is typically ignored.

Operant Conditioning: The process whereby behaviors are increased or decreased by means of systematically reinforcing approximations of a target behavior.

*Pivot***:** Using another individual's correct responding as a model for the individual engaged in inappropriate behavior with the idea that direct interactions are avoided, removing the possibility of reinforcing the individual's inappropriate behaviors.

Physiology: Refers to heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, etc. As an individual comes under stressful or demanding circumstances, these physiological components increase. Physiological functions enable and fuel behavior.

Pre-crisis behaviors: The second level of the crisis continuum that includes off-task behaviors, unreasonable thinking, inappropriate feelings, and heightened physiology.

Professional Crisis Management: A comprehensive and fully integrated system of procedures designed to 1) prevent crisis situations and de-escalate pre-crisis behaviors, 2) contain and decrease aggressive, disruptive, and self-injurious behaviors, 3) provide staff with a range of personal safety techniques, 4) transport individuals and reintegrate them into existing treatment and academic settings, and 5) conduct post-crisis intervention and analysis.

Professional Crisis Management Association (PCMA): A private consulting organization that specializes in Applied Behavior Analysis. PCMA certifies practitioners and instructors in Professional Crisis Management.

Reinforcement: Environmental events that follow a response and increase the probability that the response will occur again in future behavior.

Shaping: Repeated reinforcements of small improvements or steps toward a new or different behavior.

Stable Functioning: The first level of the crisis continuum with the following characteristics – behavior is on-task, thinking is reasonable, feelings are appropriate, and physiology in relaxed.

Target behaviors: the specific behavior that has been chosen to be increased, decreased, or maintained.

APPENDIX F

SOUTH CAROLINA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

November 20, 2012

Mr. Mark Adams
College of Education
Education Leadership & Policies
Wardlaw
Columbia, SC 29208

Re: **Pro00019557** Study Title: *Principal Leadership and School Culture within a School Wide Implementation of Professional Crisis Management*

Dear Mr. Adams:

The Office of Research Compliance, an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB), has completed an administrative review of the referenced research project on behalf of the USC IRB, and has determined that it is exempt from the Protection of Human Subject Regulations (45 CFR 46 et. seq.). No further oversight by the USC IRB is required; however, the investigator should inform this office prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the exempt status of the project.

If you have questions, please contact Arlene McWhorter at arlenem@sc.edu or (803) 777-7095.

Lisa M. Johnson IRB Manager

cc: Lynn Harrill

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