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## The Preferred Leadership Style of South Carolina, Title I, Middle School Principals: Is There a Relationship to Student Achievement ?

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# The Preferred Leadership Style of South Carolina, Title I, Middle School Principals: Is There a Relationship to Student Achievement?

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Treasure, Brandon, Brandie, Rhiyanna, and Hasan. Everything I do, I do for you. Thanks for the support, encouragement, and faith in me.

My dad, Ralph Greene, thank you for instilling in me the desire to follow my dreams. I am truly lucky to have a wonderful parent that modeled for me what hard work and ambition can accomplish.

To my dissertation support team who was always supporting me when I needed it. I thank you for your positive words and sarcasm when it was needed. Thank you all for supporting me on my educational path of discovery. In return, I give you my support, encouragement and belief that you can accomplish your dreams.

To my brothers, who have always been there for their big sister. Thank you.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would first like to acknowledge my Charleston Cohort members who supported me through this dissertation journey. I am thankful for the school districts that allowed me to contact principals for my research. I am also thankful to Mind Garden for allowing me to use their assessment, MLQ Form 5X.

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the self-perceived leadership style preferred by Title I middle school principals and its association to student achievement as measured by the South Carolina, Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) tests. Research studying effective schools strongly supports the concept that school principals are the key to a school's success or failure. This study was conducted in South Carolina school district middle schools with grade configuration of sixth to eight grade. Twelve schools were selected based on Title I status, or the school's poverty rate, and included only schools in which the principal had served in the same school for three or more years. The researcher contacted South Carolina superintendents were contacted to seek support for participation. Once permission was granted, the researcher contacted each school's principal to seek their agreement to participate in the study. Follow-up emails were made to each school to ensure that they received the surveys and to determine whether they had questions. Data were gathered from principals via voluntary completion of the Bass and Avolio's *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X (Short Form)*. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The survey results suggested that the self-perceived leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals was transformational leadership style and there was no relationship between leadership styles and student achievement as measured by the PASS tests.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

The researcher in this study sought to determine the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible associations to students' academic achievement, as measured by the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) test. This chapter introduces the study and presents the purpose, research questions, significance, and methodology.

### **Leadership**

Leadership can be defined in many ways. The concept of leadership is always evolving and expanding. Leadership is a multifaceted interaction between leaders and the members of the organization. Although, Leithwood, et al. (1999) concluded that there is not one common definition for leadership, Stoll and Fink (1996) stated that leaders direct members of the organization to cooperate, share, build, and evolve the visions and goals which will enhance the experience for all members. A Leader may be defined as a person who "motivates and influences others to work toward a certain goal" (Cuban, 1988, p. 193). Leadership can be associated with management, because both motivate and influence people giving the organization a direction (Fidler, 1997, p.26). However Bush (1998) disagreed with the link between leadership and management and stated that implementation and management is only about procedures. Many definitions of leadership incorporate the concepts of influencing and motivating the members of the organization.

Influence is one feature of leadership, but there are also many other aspects of leadership that are equally important. Leadership can also be defined as the ability to adopt strategies to confront issues (Bush, 1996). Influence asserted by one person over a group. Yukl (1999) insisted that leadership should be a collaborative decision making process. Bass (2000) asserted that leadership is the method by which an individual or group influences another individual or group to achieve a common goal. Bass (2008) implied that leadership involves the use of interpersonal techniques with the goal of convincing members of the organization to accept the shared goals and visions of the organization. Once the mission is accepted, the leader motivates followers to engage in the behavior necessary to accomplish the goals and visions. Leadership is the process of moving from the current status of an organization to a future status that is desired by the leader (Bass, 2008). The leader works to ensure the success of the organization by achieving the goals and visions he/she has brought to the organization. To achieve the shared goals and visions, the leader must have the ability to influence and motivate the members of the organization to follow. Many descriptions of leadership incorporate ideas of motivating members of the organization.

The aforementioned explanation may identify leadership in various organizations, but can these descriptions also be applied to the school organization? School leaders, principals, have vision, influence, motivation, and values needed to be effective leaders. Principals act as the organizational leader, influencing all stakeholders to work toward a common goal. Leithwood (1999) contended that leadership focuses on the behavior of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the academic achievement of students. Sheppard (1999) reasoned that leadership incorporated school culture and

teacher behaviors. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) summarized that there are three components to effective school leadership; defining the school's mission, managing educational activities, and promoting a positive school climate. School leaders have a moral, ethical focus central to the school's values and beliefs. The leaders 'moral compass' exceeds goals and roles and focuses on the tasks of building purpose within the organization. An effective leader is continuously building consistency between principles and practice and is able to reaffirm and modify ideologies when necessary (West-Birnham, 1997). Many explanations of school leadership incorporate the importance of vision, motivation, influence, and values. Leadership is a complex process involving the interaction of numerous components. Principal leadership involves collaboration and influencing all stakeholders to reach the desired outcome. The leader articulates and models the vision at every opportunity. For the purpose of this study, leadership was defined as a school leader that focuses on the teaching and learning of teachers and students; influencing and motivating stakeholders to achieve the shared vision that is based on clear personal and professional values, and creating a positive environment for student success. Effective leadership produces effective organizations. The approach a leader takes to produce an effective organization is important (Copeland, 2001).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of the study was to determine the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible association to student achievement as measured by the PASS. Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles were examined to determine which of these leadership styles are more

prevalent in South Carolina ,Title I, middle schools and if there is a possible association to student achievement.

### **Problem Statement**

The school administrator, principal, is the linchpin for success in the educational organization. Leadership is important in promoting and managing schools development by influencing students both directly and indirectly. Leadership styles provide significant differences in the organizations and affect the learning environment. At the core of leadership styles is the premise that leaders provide direction for organizations. The successful principal shares those expectations with stakeholders (Hughes, 2004). Quality leadership fosters increased student achievement for all students (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood et al., 2006). Leadership styles impacts students' success in school (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger & Hek,1996; Hallinger et al., 1996; Leithwood et al., 2006; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003).

Leadership styles, specifically, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, make a difference in the success of an organization. The problem addressed in this study involves the preferred leadership style. This study will ascertain if there is a preferred leadership style in South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and if there is a possible association to student achievement as measured by the PASS test.

### **Significance of Study**

The changing educational landscape has encouraged principals to evaluate their leadership style. They are confronted with the reality that the way they led in the past may not be the way they need to lead in the future. A review of literature reveals that there are numerous studies investigating the relationship between principal leadership

styles and student achievement; however, there are few studies specifically investigating the preferred leadership styles of Title I, middle school principal association to student achievement (Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves & Chapman, 2003).

Middle schools principals encounter a unique set of challenges. Middle schools are an intermediate phase between elementary school and high school, typically consisting of grades 6-8. The middle school years signify a critical time for adolescences. The middle school concept attempts to create an educational experience more appropriate for adolescents introducing new organizational and instructional practices; such as, interdisciplinary team teaching. However, middle schools may not educationally serve the needs of young teens. To combat challenges, middles school leadership must be studied; however, there are few studies highlighting the principal leaders of middle school when compared to elementary and high school studies.

Another challenge of middle school principals may be the transition to middle school. The separation of middle school originally stemmed from societal and demographic pressures, not scientific evidence supporting the need for a separate school for adolescences. There is evidence suggesting that separate schools and the transitions may cause difficulties that adversely affect students' developmental and academic progress; therefore, it may beneficial for students to endure fewer transitions during their k-12 education (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). Middle school principals' leadership may support stakeholders by implementing procedures to ensure students have a smooth transition to middle school. Middle school transition is important for students' success. Principal's leadership style may support a structure of transitional support for students and parents as they adjust socially, academically and mentally to the challenges of middle

schools. Few studies have addressed middle school principals and their leadership style and association to student achievement.

Student achievement may be a challenge in middle schools. Data show slow but steady increases in achievement scores since the 1970s. However, about 70% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade public school students fail to reach proficient levels of performance in reading, mathematics, and science on standardized tests. This is particularly true for minority students in Title I schools. The continuing unsatisfactory performance of middle schools may be partially explained by inadequate implementation of middle school concepts in most districts and schools. Core practices such as interdisciplinary team teaching and advisory programs tend to be ineffectively implemented with little focus on fundamental goals. Insufficient levels of fidelity to reform practices, core practices, resources, and long-term support also may play a role in student achievement. Since students in Title I schools generally fail to reach proficient levels of performance in reading, mathematics, and science on standardized tests, understanding the foundation of the middle school concept and core practices will aid middle school principals in ensuring student achievement. The middle school principal leadership style supports the unique middle school experience. Principals' leadership styles may play an important role in supporting and motivating teachers and students to achieve.

School climate may be a challenge in middle schools and it is a factor affecting student's ability to learn. Disengagement and social alienation are linked to low achievement and may predict a student's propensity for dropping out. National school safety statistics suggest that physical conflict is especially problematic in middle schools, and student concerns about safety predict emotional distress that can compromise



academic performance. Such findings stress the need to examine an assortment of student outcomes in addition to academic indicators. Middle school principal leadership style affects school climate. To ensure a safe climate conducive to learning, principals must implement procedures and expectations to support the desired climate; however, an important element of any school climate is the principal's behaviors, decisions, attitude, and ways of dealing with staff, students, and parents. Principal leadership style plays a major role in maintaining a positive school climate. There are few studies about middle school principal leadership styles and school climate, a factor influencing student achievement.

Trained staff may be a challenge in middle schools. Many middle school teachers do not have a major, minor, or certification in the subjects they teach or training in the development of adolescents. Evidence-based models of professional development for teachers can be adopted to improve the subject-area expertise and the pedagogical skills of teachers. Principals face similar training issues, in addition to other challenges. Disciplinary issues increase a principal's workload and can decrease the time and effort the individual has to spend on other leadership functions. Different management approaches may be considered that permit principals to delegate their managerial duties and foster a school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Another challenge faced by middle school principals is that of lack of involvement by parents. Research shows that parental involvement declines as students' progress through school and that middle schools do less than elementary schools to engage parents (Bedard, & Do, 2005). Middle schools should provide information about school practices and offer concrete suggestions for activities that parents and teens can do

together at home. Middle school principals can play a major role in making sure parents have an active role in their child's education. A principal's leadership style may initiate, encourage, and foster communication between school and home.

This study focuses on Title I, middle school principal's leadership styles. Researchers George and Oldaker (1985) referred to the "middle school movement" as "one of the largest and most comprehensive efforts at educational reorganization in the history of American public schooling" (p.1). Dewey, Thorndike and Hall offered developmental theories of adolescence which prompted the development of educational strategies targeted at young adolescents (Alspaugh,1992). Awareness of these theories/strategies also led to the development of schools designed to meet the specific needs of these learners. According to Clark & Clark (1994) student dropout rates and variations in learning styles for the middle level learner prompted the development of educational institutions geared towards meeting the emotional, social, physical, and intellectual needs of young adolescents. There is not a single individual more important to initiating and sustaining improvement in middle grades school students' performance than the school principal (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Accountability is an enormous responsibility for everyone involved; however, the middle level administrator is at the front of the line when it comes to student achievement. The school leader is ultimately responsible for providing and promoting a safe, effective learning environment for each student.

A principal's leadership style has influence, direct or indirect, on student achievement (Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyrakides, 2010). As student achievement in schools is the primary means of evaluating administrator effectiveness, many studies

have been conducted in the area of school leadership and student achievement. Walters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found a positive correlation between leadership and student achievement in a study that involved multiple data collection methods, including interviews and surveys of students, parents, teachers and leaders. Participants were questioned in reference to the leadership practices within their schools and their perceptions of leadership roles and responsibilities in the area of student achievement. Crawford's (1998) results indicated that leaders who are driven to succeed have high standards for themselves, their faculty, staff, and students which may result in an increase in student achievement.

Cotton's (2003) and Glutthorn's (1997) research indicates that the role of the principal is significant in promoting school level change such as student achievement. DuFour (2002) added that principals should be the school's learning leaders. McEwin (1996) and Trimble (2003) indicated that middle school leaders must utilize curriculum instructional methods that appeal to young adolescents and that they must be knowledgeable of and proficient with new technology in teaching and analyzing data. Glickman (2002), Fullan (2003) and Blasé (1998) maintained that principals must monitor student and teacher learning gaps and effectively supervise both and encourage them to acquire higher performance levels. Studies have investigated the leadership styles of elementary and high school principals; however, few studies investigate Title I, middle school principals (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson & Austin, 1997).

This study is significant because it may fill a gap in previous research concerning the preferred leadership style of Title I, middle school principals and association to student achievement. Middle school principals face their own set of concerns. Jackson &

Davis (2000) stated, “The main purpose of middle grades education is to promote young adolescents’ intellectual development” (p. 10). Middle level principals keep student achievement in mind as they implement a middle school program and understand that is possible for the curriculum to be appropriate and rigorous (Anfara & Waks, 2001; Clark & Clark, 2003) while maintaining a school climate conducive to learning.

Middle level principals’ roles have changed (Valentine, Maher, Quinn, & Irvin, 1999). They are currently being challenged to adjust their leadership style to the needs of the organization (Leithwood, 1999). According to research, middle schools have not been extremely successful in addressing student achievement concerns, especially in lower-income communities and for students with special needs (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann & Petzko, 2004). On this same note, according to Balfanz & MacIver (2000) poor educational quality in many urban area middle schools have resulted in students unable to experience success upon transition to their high school setting. Jackson & Davis (2000) address this concern as they advocate “equity in outcomes for all groups of students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, family income, or linguistic background. In order to have a more complete understanding of the middle school principal, research presenting the leadership styles of middle school principals and association to student achievement is essential. This study aided in filling the gap by providing information that is beneficial to middle school principals as they work to become effective leaders. This study may also bring about change by providing research concerning the importance of leadership style during a time of transition, and facilitating change to support student achievement. The aim of this study was to provide a discussion in the field of education.

## **Research Questions**

The major research questions for this study are;

1. Is there a preferred leadership style of principals in Title I middle schools in South Carolina?
2. Is there a relationship between the preferred leadership style of principals in Title I middle school in South Carolina and student achievement?
3. Is there a relationship between leadership styles and select demographic factors: sex, race, and experience?

## **Methodology**

The researcher in this study sought to determine whether there is a preferred leadership style of Title I middle school principals in South Carolina and the possible association to student academic achievement. The variables of interest were principal leadership styles, as preferred by the principal. The variables were not manipulated and therefore are considered variables of interests (Howell, 2008).

Two instruments were used to acquire the necessary data for the investigation. The Palmetto Assessments of States Standards (PASS) measured the students' academic success. The leadership styles of the principal were determined by using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio & Bass, 1995, 2000, 2004).

The MLQ is widely used for measuring leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire). The MLQ has been widely used in empirical research, particularly research concerning the relationship between leadership styles and other factors. In the review of the literature, the MLQ 5X short form was found to be highly reliable. The reliability of MLQ 5X-short in different studies was demonstrated even

when it was translated into other languages. Yuhl (1994) stated that the MLQ 5X has a scale that consists of 45 items answered by participants using a five-point Likert scale. Yukl (1994) noted that “most of the research on the theory of leadership styles has involved the use of a questionnaire called the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure various aspects of transformational and transactional leadership” (p. 353). Although the MLQ is the most widely used instrument to assess transformational leadership theory (Kirkbride, 2006) and “is considered the best validated measure of transformational and transactional leadership” (Ozaralli, 2003, p. 338), the MLQ has been criticized for its conceptual framework (Charbonneau, 2004; Yukl, 1998; Northouse, 1997).

The MLQ was created by Bass (year) and his colleagues to identify quantities of transformational leadership. The original questionnaire consisted of three parts; the first part described the information of the respondents; the second part measured the three styles of leadership; the third part measured leadership outcomes. For the purposes of this study, the focus is on the second part, which reflects three styles of leadership. The original questionnaire had a total of 141 statements. These statements were classified as either transformational or transactional leadership. The questionnaire was then administered to U.S. Army officers and they were told to rate their superior officers on a scale from 0 (not observed) to 4 (behavior observed frequently). Bass, (1998) developed the following four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Bass’ (1998) model of leadership also included three dimensions of transactional leadership: contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire, or non-leadership

behavior. Contingent reward relates to earlier work conducted by Burns (1978) where the leader rewards the members of the organization for desired performance. Management-by-exception (MBE) is categorized by leader monitoring tasks and mistakes are corrected if needed. Laissez-faire leadership is an avoidance of leadership. Bass (1998) believed that every leader used the aforementioned styles in certain situations.

The MLQ-5X contains 45 items with nine leadership factors and three leadership outcomes. Five scales identify characteristics of transformational leadership, (idealized influence attributed and behavior, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation). Three scales identify characteristics of transactional leadership (contingent reward, management-by exception-active, and management-by-exception-passive). One scale identifies characteristics of non-leadership (laissez-faire) (Avolio, et al., 1995). Many studies have used the MLQ dimensions of leaders to equate leader effectiveness. Transformational leadership has been correlated with the leader's performance and motivation (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Research has also shown a relationship between transactional components and effective leadership (Avolio & Howell, 1992; Bass, Avolio & Goodheim, 1987; Curphy, 1992; Deluga, 1991; Hater & Bass, 1988; Seltzer & Bass, 1990; Sridhar, Valecha & Sridhar, 1994; Waldman, Bass & Einstein, 1987; Waldman, Bass & Yammarino, 1990; Yammarino & Bass, 1990). Overall, the MLQ-5X (Avolio et al., 1995) is a sound test of the full range of leadership behaviors and is adequate, reliable, and strongly recommended for uses in research settings.

Students' academic achievement was assessed using the PASS test. The PASS is a statewide assessment administered to students in grades four through eight. All students

in these grade levels are required to take the PASS. PASS includes tests in four subjects: math, English language arts (ELA), science and social studies. PASS test items measure student performance on the South Carolina Academic Standards. The PASS test items are aligned to the standards for each subject and grade level. Standards outline what schools are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn. Academic standards also include indicators that are statements of the specific cognitive processes and the content knowledge and skills that students must demonstrate to meet the grade-level standards. PASS test items are written to assess the content knowledge and skills described in the academic standards and indicators.

Students' PASS results were gathered from the school report card. The school report card is an annual report to stakeholders. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) requires each state to produce an annual report card that summarizes assessment results of students statewide disaggregated by student groups. Information must also be included on high school graduation rates, teacher qualifications, other indicators used in each state's definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and the AYP status of all schools and districts in the state. The State Accountability Report Card contains data for the following categories: two-year trend in student achievement in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies for grades two through eight. The State Accountability Report Card also contains data disaggregated by student groups ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies for grades two through eight.

The participating principals were also emailed a brief demographic survey to obtain the principals' characteristics of sex, years of experience, and ethnicity.



## Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study and presents the purpose, research questions, significance of study, conceptual framework, and methodology. Chapter II presents a review of the literature and research pertinent to the topic. Chapter III explains the research and methodology of this study. Chapter IV explains the demographics of the sample population and the results of the study. Chapter V states the conclusions and recommendations for further studies.

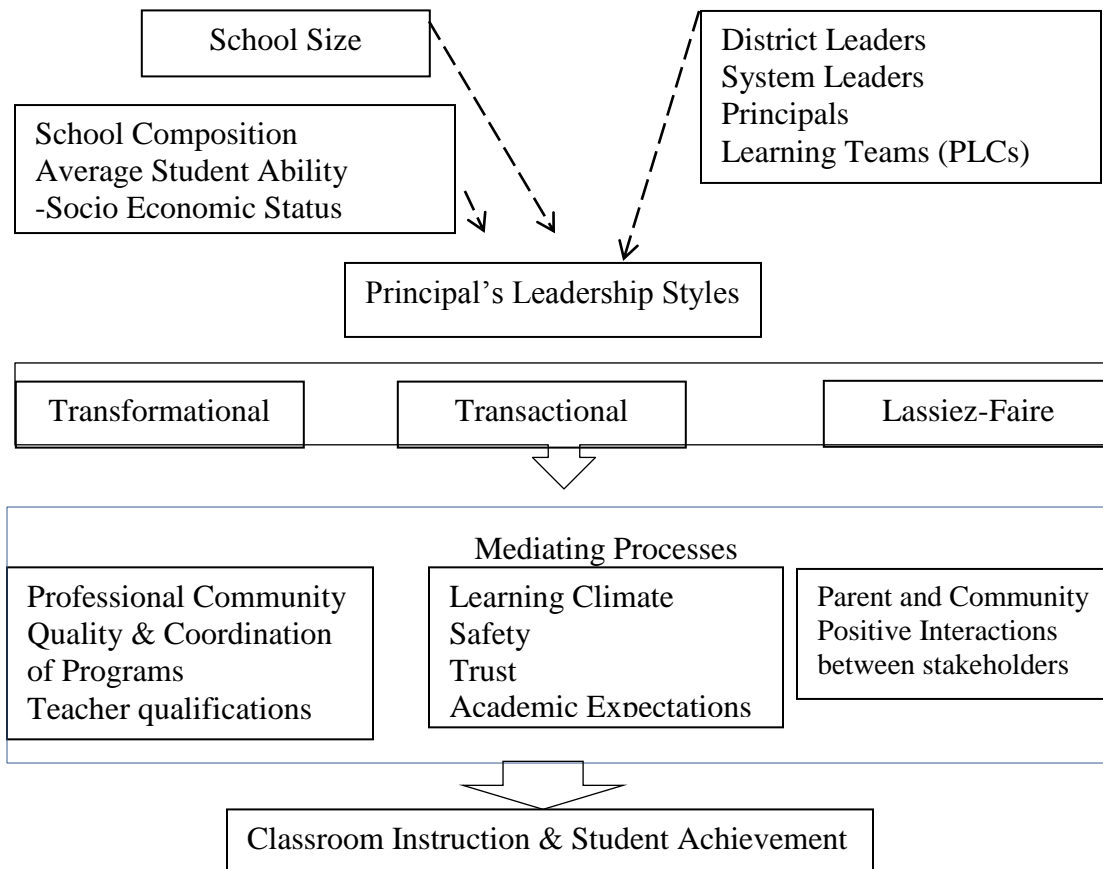


Figure 1.1: Graphic Representation: Principals' Leadership Styles in the School Organization

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This literature review was guided by the central research questions: Which of the leadership styles, transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire, is the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals? Which of the three aforementioned leadership styles have a possible association to student achievement as measured on the PASS reading and math tests?

This chapter will provide a review of literature relevant to the influence the three featured leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire), have on student achievement. This chapter is divided into four main segments: theoretical leadership framework, leadership styles, leadership styles theories and models, and leadership styles' relationship to student achievement. This research will establish the summary of relevant findings and groundwork for examining the preferred leadership style of principals in Title I, middle schools in South Carolina.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Leadership style is central to organizational success. Educational organizations are changing and encountering many more challenges (Jones, 2000). According to Gunter (2001), the responsibility of educational leadership is to support learning activities and provide an environment that enables and supports members of the organization. Butcher et al. (2000) recognized the importance of leadership for any substantial change in the

educational organization. Positive or successful leadership styles or behaviors are conducive to successful organizations.

Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire are the three leadership styles that comprise the full range leadership model. The full range leadership model, proposed by Burns (1978), has been investigated by researchers and discussed in literature. This model has been described as a cutting edge leadership model (Robbins, 2005), and proposes that some leaders, transformational leaders, are charismatic, inspire and motivate members of the organization, and seek and develop future leaders. The full range leadership model proposes that some leaders, transactional leaders, specify tasks, monitor performance, and provide a reward system for tasks completed successfully. The full range leadership model proposes that some leaders, laissez-faire leaders, avoid involvement. The full range model of leadership has been studied in different cultures and occupations particularly in high schools. However, it has rarely been used to examine leadership styles of middle schools principals. The researcher in this study intended to determine the preferred leadership styles of middle schools principals in South Carolina.

The full range leadership model is based on the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership as developed by Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass (1995). According to Bass (1997), the transactional-transformational distinction views leadership “as either a matter of contingent reinforcement of members of the organization by a transactional leader or the moving of members of the organization beyond their self-interests to the good of the group by a transformational leader” (p. 130). The full range leadership model has been discussed widely and proven to be “the mainstream in leadership research” (Stordeur et al., 2001). This triad of leadership styles,

transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, provide a framework for studying the roles of leaders in changing organizations.

The first style in the full range leadership model triad is transformational leadership style. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership provides an ideal style of leadership. Transformational leadership has been the topic of much research given rapidly evolving organizations (Howell & Higgins, 1990), evolving work force expectations (Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Sagie, 1997; Vroom, 2000), and the need for competing internationally and in multicultural environments (Church & Wacławski, 1999; Gibson & Marcoulides, 1995; Rosenzweig, 1998). The full range leadership model also allows for passive behaviors or laissez-faire behaviors (Bass, 1990; Den Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1994). The ability of leaders to use the full range of leadership behaviors may define an effective leader from an ineffective leader.

Transformational leaders are proactive and help members of the organization achieve extraordinary goals. Transformational leadership comprises the following five first order factors: (1) idealized influence (attributed) refers to the leader's social charisma, the leader appears confident and powerful; (2) idealized influence (behavior) refers to the leader's charismatic activities focusing on values, beliefs, and a sense of mission; (3) inspirational motivation refers to the approaches leaders use to motivate the members of the organization; (4) intellectual stimulation refers to leader's actions that challenge members of the organization to think creatively and find solutions to difficult problems; and (5) individualized consideration refers to the leader's behaviors that support members of the organization (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

Howell and Higgins (1990) recognized that transformational leaders are usually labeled as champions based on their enigmatic personalities, confidence, motivation, and a variety of influence tactics within the organization.

The second style in the full range leadership model triad is the transactional leadership style. The transactional leadership style's primary foci are rewards and punitive actions. The leaders may gain and maintain compliance by offering rewards for desired performance and punitive actions for undesired performance. Transactional leadership, or managerial leadership, focuses on the role of managing the performance of members of the organization (Sergiovanni, 2007). Transactional leadership is an exchange process based on the fulfillment of obligations and is typically characterized by setting objectives and monitoring and controlling outcomes. Transactional leadership comprises the following three first order factors: (1) contingent reward leadership refers to the leaders' behaviors focusing on clarifying role, specifying tasks, and providing followers with materials or psychological rewards that are dependent on performance; (2) management-by-exception active refers to the active watchfulness of a leader to ensure that standards/goals are met; and (3) management-by-exception passive refers to passive leaders only intervening after noncompliance has occurred or when mistakes have already happened (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Transactional leaders, a task oriented leadership style, focus on the day to day process as a strategy to help their staff become effective.

The laissez-faire leadership style is the third component in the full range leadership triad. Laissez-faire leaders allow members of the organization to make their own decisions. This type of leadership style gives little or no direction. Leaders do not

help in decision-making; sometimes, this lack of direction can lead to chaos. Laissez-faire leadership represents the absence of leadership in which the leader avoids making decisions, relinquishes responsibility, and does not use their authority. It is considered active to the extent that the leader “chooses” to avoid taking action. This component is generally considered the most passive and ineffective form of leadership (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

The full range leadership model has become important in research and has proven to be “the mainstream in leadership research” (Strodeur et. al, 2001). The full range leadership model is one of the most researched and validated leadership models today (Gill, 2006). The leadership style of an organizational leader highlights the leader’s primary roles of allocation of tasks and encouraging members of the organization to work as a unit (Prawat & Peterson, 1999; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Full Range Leadership Model		
<b>Transformational Leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charisma</li> <li>- Individualized</li> <li>- Consideration</li> <li>- Intellectual Simulation</li> <li>- Inspiration</li> </ul>	<b>Transactional Leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contingent Reward</li> <li>- Management by Exception</li> </ul>	<b>Laissez-faire Leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little or no leadership</li> </ul>

Figure 2.1 Full Range Leadership Model

### Leadership Theories or Models

Many theorists have attempted to identify leadership behaviors, or styles, associated with successful organizations (Marzano, 2005). Members of the organization

are influenced, motivated, and guided by leaders' behaviors or style. What follows is a brief overview of leadership styles that are pivotal in the research of principal's leadership styles and student achievement. These styles encompass four main theories: trait, behavioral, contingency, and transformational (Owens, 1991).

### **Great Man Theory**

A review of the literature reveals that many theories have been designed to explain leadership behaviors or styles. One of the first theories, the great man theory, states that great leaders are born and inherit special characteristics and qualities (Stogdill, 1958). Originally proposed by Carlyle, the great man theory determines that these leaders have more intelligence, persistence, and ambition than the average man. This theory supports the belief that "certain identifiable qualities separate leaders from non-leaders and these inherent traits are transferrable from situation to situation" (Bass & Stogdill, 1991, p.287). This early model was based on studies of great leaders from the aristocratic social class and assumed that breeding played a major role in leadership (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1992). Bennis and Nanus (1985) summarized this theory as "those of the right breed could lead; all others must be led" (p. 5).

### **Trait Theory**

The trait theory arose from the great man theory as a way of identifying the key characteristics of successful leaders. This model of leadership views leaders as being born with inherited leadership traits. It was believed that leadership traits could be identified and people with these traits could be successful leaders (Northouse, 2004). Stogdill (1974) concluded that traits for successful leaders include: adaption to situations, alertness to social environment, ambitious and achievement-orientated, assertive,

cooperative, decisive, dependable, dominant, energetic, persistent, self-confident, tolerant of stress, and willingness to assume responsibility. McCall and Lombardo (1983) posited that traits for successful leaders include: emotional stability, admitting mistakes, interpersonal skills, and intellectual ability. However, after years of research, common consistent traits could not be identified (Stogdill, 1948). Attempts to isolate specific individual traits led to the conclusion that no single characteristic can distinguish leaders from non-leaders. Stogdill (1948) concluded that “a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits” (p. 64). Today, the focus is on teaching leadership skills to develop leaders, not finding people with specific inherited traits who could also become great leaders.

### **Behavioral Theory**

Behavioral theories of leadership are based upon the belief that great leaders are made, not born. Based in behaviorism, this leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders not on inherited traits. Behavior theorists conclude that members of the organization become leaders through training and observation (Yukl, 2006).

The most inclusive and replicated of the behavioral theories resulted from research that began at Ohio State University in the late 1940s. This study, under direction of Ralph Stogdill, sought to determine effective leadership styles by identifying independent dimensions of leaders' behavior. Thousands of dimensions were identified. The study concluded that two dimensions, initiating structure, and consideration, described the independent aspects of leaders' behaviors (Fleishman, 1953). Initiating structure refers to the extent to which a leader is likely to define and structure his/her role and those of members of the organization to meet organizational goals. Consideration



refers to the extent to which members of the organization are likely to have professional relationships characterized by trust and respect for the ideas and feelings of others. The Ohio State studies found two independent critical components of leadership: initiating structure, and consideration. The Ohio State studies were conducted around the same time as the University of Michigan leadership studies, which identified tasks and people as important components of leadership style (Stogdill, Goode, & Day, 1962).

The University of Michigan leadership studies were conducted to identify independent dimensions of leaders' behaviors. The study identified two dimensions, employee-oriented and production-oriented, to describe the independent aspects of leaders' behaviors (Likert, 1967). The employee-oriented dimension refers to taking a personal interest in the needs of members of the organization and valuing individual differences among members. The production-oriented dimension refers to the organizational tasks; members of the organization are only a means to meeting the goals. Michigan researchers concluded that leaders who were employee oriented were associated with higher productivity and job satisfaction (Fleishman, & Hunt, 1973). The University of Michigan study, under direction of Likert, conducted studies to determine leadership effectiveness. The objectives were to classify leaders as effective or ineffective by comparing behaviors to determine reasons for effective leadership.

### **The Managerial Grid**

Influenced by the Ohio State's study, Blake and Mouton, in the 1960's proposed a managerial grid based on two behavioral dimensions, concern for people and production. The grid represents the Ohio State's dimensions of initiating structure and consideration and the Michigan's dimensions of employee-oriented and production-oriented (Blake &

Mouton, 1961). The Managerial Grid or Leadership Grid plots the degree of task-centeredness versus person-centeredness and identifies combinations as distinct leadership styles (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Blake and Mouton conclude that organizations need dedicated members to fulfill tasks; therefore, commitment and shared decision making determine organizational success.

### **McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y**

McGregor's theory x and theory y encourage leaders to adjust their leadership styles based on employee motivation. McGregor's theory x and theory y "describes two sets of conflicting assumptions that administrators tend to hold about people and their attitudes toward work" (Owens, 1998, p. 269). Theory x concedes that members of the organization avoid work when possible; therefore, leaders must be present to direct the average member of the organization through daily tasks. Theory y states the opposite, that members of the organization enjoy working in a positive way. Rewards and compliments motivate members of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 1997). McGregor's theory x and theory y state that members of the organization enjoy work and accept it as a normal part of life, and seek opportunities to be responsible and innovative (Bolman & Deal, 1997). McGregor's theory x and y is a leadership style that is influenced by the leaders' beliefs and assumptions and motivation of the members of the organization. McGregor's theory x implies that to achieve organizational objectives, leaders impose a system of coercion, rules, and consequences on members of the organization. McGregor's theory x implies organizational members achieve organizational objectives when leaders impose a system of rewards.

## **Participative Leadership**

Participative leadership is a style of leadership that involves all members of a team with the leader functioning as facilitator. The participative leadership style promotes the development of future leaders. Members are actively involved, express creativity, demonstrate abilities and talents, and involvement in relevant decision-making (Bass & Bass, 2008). Members of the organization are less competitive and more collaborative when working on joint goals. Collaborative decision making evokes better decisions than one person alone. A participative leader seeks to involve other people in organizational strategic planning.

## **Lewin's leadership styles**

In 1939, a group of researchers, led by Lewin, attempted to identify different styles of leadership. Further research has recognized more specific types of leadership; nonetheless, this study was significant and established three leadership styles. In Lewin's study, school children were assigned to one of three groups with an authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-fair leader. The children were then led in an art project while researchers observed the behavior of children in response to different styles of leadership (Bass, 1990).

The autocratic style leader makes decisions without consulting others. The study found this leadership style causes levels of dissatisfaction; however, this style can be effective in some situations; such as, when there is no need for input or the decision would not change as a result of input. Democratic leaders involve the members of the organization in decision-making. This style of leadership is supported by members of the organization; however, can be challenging when there is a wide range of opinions and

options. The laissez-faire leader minimizes involvement in decision-making, and allows members of the organization to make decisions. Laissez-faire leadership style can be successful when members of the organization are capable and motivated in making their own decisions. Lewin concluded that the most effective leadership style is democratic (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Lewin recognized that one of the factors that determine a leader's choice of leadership style is the need to make decisions. In 1939 he identified three styles of leadership decision making: the autocratic, the democratic and the laissez-faire.

### **Situational leadership**

Situational leadership, developed and studied by Blanchard and Hersey, states that instead of using just one style, successful leaders change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they're leading and the details of the task. Leadership styles change continually, based on the situation, to meet the needs of the organization (Whitaker, 2003). “This theory attempts to provide understanding of the relationship between an effective style of leadership and the level of maturity of group followers” (John & Moser, 1989, p. 119). Maduakolam and Bailey (1999) stated that the “principles of situational leadership model imply that little task and relationship behavior from the leader is needed when the group reaches a high maturity level,” (p. 23). Using this theory to accomplish organizational goals, leaders place more or less emphasis on the task, and more or less emphasis on relationships with the members of the organization to accomplish goals.

## **Contingency theory**

“The first and perhaps most popular, situational theory to be advanced, the contingency theory of leadership effectiveness developed by Fiedler” (Bedeian, & Glueck, 1993). Fiedler’s theory states that group performance is dependent on two factors, leadership style and situational favorableness. “In Fiedler's model, leadership effectiveness is the result of interaction between the style of the leader and the characteristics of the environment in which the leader works,” (Dunham & Randall, 1984). Many researchers conclude that leadership style is contingent on circumstances; such as, situation, people, task, organization, and other environmental variables. Fiedler examined three situations that define leadership behavior; leader member relations, task structure, and position and power. His contingency theory postulates that there is no single best way for leaders to lead.

The contingency model is based on four assumptions: leadership style depends on the requirements of the situation; leadership can be learned; leadership involves understanding situational contingencies; and the link between leader's style, personality, and the situation leads to effectiveness. The first major factor in Fiedler's theory is known as the leadership style. This is the consistent system of interaction that takes place between a leader and members of the organization. “According to Fiedler, an individual's leadership style depends upon his or her personality and is, thus, fixed” (Bedeian, & Glueck, 1993). Fiedler's contingency theory states that leadership depends not only on the style of leading but on the control over a situation; including, good leader-member relations, tasks with clear goals, and procedures. Lacking these three in the right combination and context will result in leadership failure. Many studies have attempted to

identify “distinctive characteristics of the setting to which the leader's success could be attributed” (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 273). Hencley (1973) reviewed leadership theories and stated that “the situational approach maintains that leadership is determined not so much by the characters of the individuals as by the requirements of social situation” (p. 38).

### **Transactional/Transformational**

Transformational and transactional leadership theories have been proposed by several theorists, including Bass (1985, 1996). Transformation and transactional, two prominent leadership theories, are different in concept and practice. Some researchers believed that these two leadership styles complement each other. (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Lowe et al, 1996). Other researchers agree that transactional leadership is a subset of transformational leadership (Wehrich et al, 2008). Leithwood stated that “transactional and transformational leadership represent opposite ends of the leadership continuum,” (as cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p.17).

Transformational leaders’ objectives are to motivate members of the organization to achieve goals and create positive change in members of the organization (Robbins & Coulter, 2007; Warrilow, 2012). Transactional, managerial leadership, objectives are supervision, organizational processes, and group performance. Transactional leaders ensure compliance with rewards and punishments. Unlike transformational leadership, transactional leaders maintain the organization, not transform the organization.

Transactional leaders are concerned with procedures rather than forward-thinking ideas.

Burns distinguished between transactional and transformational leaders. According to Burns, transactional leaders exchange rewards for meeting organization

goals. Transformational leaders engage members of the organization and raise awareness about targeted goals and innovative methods to achieve goals (Hay, 2012).

Transformational leaders gain influence by “demonstrating characteristics such as self-confidence, dominance, and a strong conviction in the moral righteousness of one's beliefs” (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987, p. 650).

In conclusion, researchers study leadership behaviors to help understand the art of leading. Early studies distinguished between leaders' and followers' traits and found no single, or combination, of traits to explain leaders' success. Using the contingency model to investigate the link between personal traits, situational variables, and leader effectiveness, researchers studied the influence of situational variables on leaders' behaviors, and attempted to differentiate effective from non-effective leaders.. Thus far, studies conclude leaders and leadership behaviors are key and also multifaceted components of organizations.

### **Leadership Styles**

Burns (1979) defined leadership as;

...leaders inducing members of the organization to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivation-the wants and the needs, the aspirations and expectations-of both leaders and members of the organization. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their members of the organization' values and motivations (p. 19).

A detailed analysis of the principal's leadership style is important because the principal can make a big difference within the organization (Viadero, 2003). Leadership styles focus on behaviors demonstrated by the leader (Poulson, Smith, Hood, Arthur &

Bazemore, 2011). They are the skills and behaviors used to motivate people, supervise and lead an organization, and continually improve the organization (Clark, 2005).

Leadership styles are generally categorized into two types, task oriented and relationship oriented. They have two main functions, direct the organizational members to accept and fulfill the desired goals or mission while influencing members to make and fulfill their own goals. Each of these functions can be carried out in different ways and such differences distinguish leadership styles (Yukl, 1994, p.3). A leader determines which leadership style is complementary to the culture, goals, and members of the organization. Leadership style is an important tool in the era of school accountability. Deal and Peterson stated that the “principal’s leadership affects every element of the school’s culture” (as cited in Hines, 2007, p. 104). Maduakolam and Bailey (1999) stated, “although schools are too complex for effectiveness to be attributed to any single dimension of organization, there is no doubt that leadership has a significant share of responsibility for effectiveness in schools” (p. 22). Leadership styles are instruments for leaders to meet their mission.

### **Transformational Leadership**

The literature defines transformational leadership in many ways.

Transformational leadership can be defined as a way to create a common goal, vision, or mission between members of the organization and leaders (Gunter, 2001; Allix, 2000). A transformational leadership style can also be defined as leaders motivating members of the organization to achieve and grow into leaders as they work to achieve common goals of the organization (Bass & Riggo, 2006). Leithwood and Janzi (2006) defined transformational leadership in terms of a process with higher levels of commitment to the



organization. Wheatley (2001) defined transformational leadership as a leader's ability to focus those within the organization on the mission and challenges faced by the organization, and how members of the organization perceive the actions of the leader.

The transformational leadership model was founded by Burns on the principle that organizational incompetence promotes change (Burns, 1979). Burns coined two leadership styles, transactional and transformational. Transactional or managerial style of leadership incorporates an exchange system. Transactional leadership works well in an organization where there are clearly defined roles, consequences, and rewards (Bass, 1990). In contrast, the transformational leadership style encourages members of the organization to work cooperatively to fulfill the organization's needs. The obligations of the organization take priority over the needs of the individual members of the organization. Burns (1979) stated that the organization's goal must have moral principles and correct a social injustice. Moral leaders take responsibility for their actions while motivating and supporting the members of the organization.

Bass used Burns work as a foundation to further refine the transformational leadership model. Bass not only conducted research in educational organizations, but also businesses and military organizations. He examined the work of Burns and built his research on the weakness of Burns' transformational model of leadership. Bass believed that the transformational model of leadership was a full range leadership model (FRL) and could stretch beyond the limitations that Burns had imposed (Bass, 1998). He investigated how leaders of organizations affected the members of the organization. To have an effective organization, transformational leaders must transform the members of the organization. Transformation of the members consists of creating an awareness of the

vision, mission, or task, and why it is important. Bass believed that transformational leaders must have a moral foundation that is based on the 4I's:

- 1) Idealized influence (charismatic leadership) is characterized by leaders becoming respected advisors. Members of the organization identify and want to imitate the leader. Transformational leaders are magnetic and embody the vision of the organization (Bass, 1998);
- 2) Inspirational motivation is characterized by leaders' actions to motivate, excite, and challenge members of the organization. These leaders have high expectations and foster a commitment to goals and shared vision (Bass, 1998);
- 3) Intellectual stimulation is characterized by leaders seeking new ideas and new ways of doing things. They motivate others to be creative and think outside the box. Members of the organization are treated as an important part of the group (Bass, 1998);
- 4) Individualized consideration is characterized by leaders that develop others in the organization by monitoring their needs; which, establishes a supportive climate where individual differences are respected. Interactions with members of the organization are sought, encouraged, and fostered (Bass, 1998).

The leader using the transformational style of leadership must create a shared vision that will capture and engage the members of the organization. The leader becomes a declaration for the vision. This declaration will encourage members of the organization to actively work toward the organization's goals. The leader must not only sell the vision

to the members of the organization but also sell him/her-self to the members of the organization. The vision and the leaders are a packaged deal. Transformational leaders are not only represented by their words, but also by their actions. Leaders must build a sense of organizational community, a sense of oneness, working toward the same goal. Transformational leaders transform the organization and the members of the organization. This relationship allows members of the organization to use their skills to meet the organization's objectives. With the leaders' support and guidance, the members of the organization become confident leaders and the leaders become facilitators. This relationship between members of the organization and leaders is a cyclical process to meet mutual goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Bass (2000) asserts that transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and prioritize the interests of employees. Transformational leaders must look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. Yukl (1998) claimed that transformational leaders articulate the vision in a clear appealing manner and explain how to attain the vision. Transformational leaders act confidently, express confidence in the members of the organization, and emphasize values with symbolic actions. These leaders manage by example, and empower followers to achieve the vision (Yukl, 1998).

Transformational leadership is more popular today than any other style (Hunt, 2005).

Transformational leadership differs from transactional leadership because these leaders' decisions are supported by their value systems, integrity, and sense of justice (Kuhmert & Lewis, 1987; Bass, 1985; Burns; 1978). The transactional model focuses on the procedures and operational systems of an organization and members of the organization are given support, motivation, guidelines, and rewards.

## **Transactional Leadership**

The literature defines transactional leadership style as an exchange system between the leader and members of the organization. The leader gains and maintains compliance by offering rewards for desired performance and consequences for undesired performance. The transactional leadership style was first devised by Max Weber in 1947 and then further developed by Bernard Bass in 1981. This style is often used by managers; therefore, it was called managerial leadership (Bass, 1990). Steidlmeier (1999) stated that transactional leaders react to organizational members as they carry out instructions. Burns (1978) described transactional leaders as leaders that motivate members of the organization by satisfying their self-interests. Aronson (2001) stated that Rost's (1991) opinion of a transactional leader was as "management of a relationship between the manager and the subordinate founded upon an authority power base and is transactional in nature," (p. 247). The transactional leadership style focus is not permanent or lasting changes, but lower order changes; such as, changes in the organization processes (Bass, Avolio & Goodheim, 1987). These lower order changes are brought about by using rewards or initiatives. This conditional reward system is characterized by the leader motivating and supporting members of the organization and ensuring expectations, missions, goals, and visions are clear and concise (Bass, 1985; Barbuta, 2005; Jung & Avolio, 2000).

The current theory of transactional leadership is characterized by three types of behaviors; contingent reward, management by exception-active, and management by exception-passive. This system places the focus on the organization, not on the members of the organization, professional development, or loyalty (Jung & Avolio, 1999). The

passive management by exception system is characterized by the leader becoming involved when expected performance expectations are not being met. Punitive actions may be put in place when members of the organization display unacceptable behaviors. The active management by exception system is characterized by the leader actively monitoring the behaviors of the members of the organization and taking a proactive approach to prevent any undesired outcomes (Bass, 1990).

The transactional leadership style's basic foundation is that members of the organization perform best when the chain of command is clear and concise, and a system of reward and punishment is in place and known and understood. Management ensures that goals are met and the basis of the style is that members of the organization conform to the leader's instructions (Den Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997). To ensure that the organization functions, the leader incorporates rules and procedures. Transactional leaders can be effective in achieving performance goals. According to Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio (1999), transactional leaders "exchange rewards or recognition for cooperation and compliance behaviors" (p. 38-39), and closely follow the task accomplishments of their followers using rewards for valued behavior. These interactions between leaders and members are episodic, short, and limited. One of the major limitations is that the staff is not engaged beyond the immediate goal; therefore, transactional leadership does not produce long term commitment to the goals (Savery, Soutar & Dyson, 1992). Transactional leadership is a simple method of leading. The organizational members have one objective, obey the leader or endure the penalty. Transactional leadership works efficiently if members' emotions and values are absent and rewards motivate the members of the organization. Transactional leaders must adopt

a well-defined chain of command and a clear system of rewards and punishments (Bass, 1985; Yuti, 1981; Kellerman, 1984). To ensure that all members of the organization are a part of the mission, transactional leaders operate an exchange system and are reactive, not proactive, to any situation that may arise (Bass, 1985; Yuti, 1981; Kellerman, 1984).

Transactional leaders do not want to transform the organization or the members, but only to solve the problem or conflict. This narrow focus on the problem can hinder transactional leaders and can sometimes end in failure. The system of rewards and punitive actions may promote members working toward the desire goal; however, this system of exchange does not promote loyalty to the organization. The exchange is not necessarily an exchange of equity (Dinham, 2004). When members of the organization are in agreement with the organization goals, organizational member releases all independence. Through this system of exchange, transactional leaders are managing the organization, not leading the organization (Lashway, 1999).

### **Laissez-faire Leadership**

The literature defines the laissez-faire style of leadership as the leader offering little or no guidance. There is an absence of leadership and the leader avoids making decisions (Robbins, 2007). To fulfill the mission, laissez-faire organizations have diverse members who have an excellent skill set and are self-motivated (Mondy & Premeaux, 1995).

The laissez-faire leadership style is characterized by leaders' allowing the members of the organization to be creative problems solvers. The leaders do not, or rarely, make decisions and take any responsibility; therefore, the organization may lack

direction. Organizations with laissez-faire leaders may ignore the needs of members and not respond to problems or monitor performance (Barbuto, 2005).

Laissez-faire leaders are generally submissive and not comfortable with giving instruction, making decisions, and motivating employees (Deluga, 1990). In many situations laissez-faire leaders do not incorporate positive or negative feedback and rarely interfere in the organization members' work. With a hands-off policy, organizational goals and mission may not be completed (Webb, 2007). Research suggests that laissez-faire leaders may meet goals with an efficient highly qualified staff (Van Eden, Cilliers & Van Deventer, 2008).

The laissez-faire method of leading encourages the members of the organization to form a professional working community and allow many opportunities for the members to be successful. Organizational members must learn to work together positively. Each member must be encouraged to use their talent and skills to fulfill the organization's goal. Laissez-faire leadership style works well when members have pride in their work and are trustworthy, motivated, creative, and experienced. Many laissez-faire leaders are opened minded, have open door policies, and give valuable feedback. Talented organization members with expertise in their field may be successful in this type of organization; however, the laissez-faire style of leadership may be unproductive if members are not motivated and creative problem solvers (McGuire & Kennerly, 2006). This type of leadership style is not ideal in many situations; such as, if the members of the organization are new and lack experience, or have difficulty solving problems and/or making decisions to accomplish the mission or goals of the organization.

The laissez-faire leadership style has a two-fold approach. First, leaders must hire the right person for the job. The concept is to hire highly qualified people for the right job and these people will have the specific skills needed to build a successful organization. The second part of the approach is that the leader must provide basic information and resources, but continue to have a hands-off approach. If the organization enters crisis mode, the leader must step forward to make some decisions. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2000) suggested that leaders use varying degrees of the laissez-faire leadership approach depending on the situation.

### **Leadership Styles and Student Achievement**

Leadership is regarded as the single most important factor in the success or failure of institutions such as schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Leithwood, 1996; Markley, 1996). Student achievement is the standard used to evaluate students, teachers, principals, and schools. The objective of an educational organization is to raise student achievement, to increase student knowledge, and prepare students for their future. State and federal accountability has raised expectations for school performance which has led to a reliance on standardized tests to measure student achievement. Student achievement is composed of three major components; the academic component consists of knowledge and skills learned and needed to be successful in school and life. The life skill component consists of the aptitude, attitude, and skills needed to succeed in life, and the civic skill component consists of student's contributions to an effective and productive community. To provide a comprehensive description of student achievement, all three components are inter-related but the focus of this study is only on the academic component of student achievement (Stiggins, 1997; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Dinham (2005)



defined student achievement as an outstanding educational success that fully develops students' talents. The student attains high standards of knowledge, skills, and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum. The researcher in this study gleaned the definition of student achievement from a number of different sources, with similar views of the topic. The researcher's definition views student achievement as a set of goals and grade appropriate skills, as indicated, in this instance, by standardized tests, such as PASS. Student achievement is possible to measure in a consistent manner from student to student which allows for comparison of individuals and students across districts, schools, or subgroups (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Daggett, 2000; Cotton, 2003).

Principals' leadership styles have been proven to affect student achievement. School reforms have placed experienced principals in an interesting predicament; they must obtain the skills of effective 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders and use a form of leadership style to ensure that their organization attains the goal of all students achieving academically (Whitaker, 2003). The school principals' main objective is to ensure that every student is proficient in reading and mathematics (Jennings, 2003). Principals are seen as the leaders of instruction and curriculum. Viadero (2003) found that effective leadership can mean a positive difference of 10 percentile points on achievement tests given in an average school. Many studies focus on the teacher's perception of the principal's leadership style and student achievement. Few studies are based on the principal's preferred leadership style and student achievement.

The effects of principal's leadership styles on student achievement have a limited number of studies because the effects are possibly mediated by teachers and climate (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood et al. conducted six studies on student outcomes

mediated by teachers. The outcome was measured on a teacher survey that asked teachers to estimate the effects being implemented in their classrooms on students' achievement. These practices were often school-wide initiatives supported by principals. The studies found substantial evidence of high correlations between school-wide initiatives and a measure of student achievement (e.g., standardized tests). The principals' leadership styles are significant in creating effective schools that help students to achieve (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). The principals' leadership style affects the process in which student achievement data are analyzed, areas of improvement are identified, and actions for change are initiated in the educational organization (Schmoker, 2005).

With the increasing number of research studies focusing on the impact of principal's leadership styles, Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1994), discussed and reviewed studies conducted from 1974 to 1988. The goal was to find studies that contributed to the body of knowledge of the impact principals' leadership styles have on student achievement. Begley and Cousins concluded that there was significant limitation in the research about school-leaders effects on student achievement, but from the number of studies, there must be an affect.

According to Crum & Sherman (2008), principals provide valuable insights into their daily practices that foster an environment which is supportive of high student achievement. To support student achievement in school organizations, organizations develop personnel, delegate responsibilities, empower teams of members, hold members accountable, and promote two way communications. Jaafar (2004) found that there were significant differences within the execution behavior of principal instructional leadership,

teachers' commitment, and job satisfaction in effective and less effective schools. Principal leaders have many functions; including monitoring student progress, framing school goals, maintaining high visibility, and developing and enforcing academic standards (Hatta, 2009). Kythreotis, et al. (2010) found that the principal leader should be able to implement the leadership style most suitable for the school's needs. It is important for the principal to possess the ability and capacity to balance the relationship between productivity and educational objectives along with coping with stress (Yusof, 2012). The school principal must develop his or her capacity in management techniques and leadership styles in order to ensure job satisfaction and effective teaching instructions among teachers (Ibrahim, 2003). Principals' leadership characteristics play an active role in steering the organization towards excellence.

According to Beare et al. (1989), outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools. Quality in education depends on the development of potential leaders (Abrar et al., 2010). Getting the job done, and done well, requires good leadership and good management (Ubben & Hughes, 1992). The research done by Sammons et al. (2011) found that leadership directly and indirectly impacts a range of school and classroom processes and indirectly effects improvements in schools' academic results. Jacobson (2011) found that direction setting, developing people, and redesigning the organization were practices common to successful principals in all contexts, including those in challenging, high-poverty schools.

In performing a meta-analysis, Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2004) looked at the effect leadership has on student achievement. Synthesizing over 25 years of research, the researchers hypothesized whether leadership is a science, skills that can be taught, or

an art, qualities and personalities traits that are innate. In conducting the research, the study focused on two important questions: Does the focus and quality of leadership have a significant relationship to student achievement? What leadership responsibilities and practices have the greatest impact? Walters, Marzano and McNulty examined more than 5,000 studies that discussed the topic of the effect of leadership on student achievement. Of the 5000 studies, the researchers examined 70 published since 1978 that reported standardized objectives and quantitative measures of achievement, such as a correlation between district leadership and student achievement, and a standardized measure to index student achievement. The sample created contained 2,894 schools, 14,000 teachers and 1.1 million students. Results indicated that leadership matters. A statistically significant correlation of ( $r = .24$ ;  $p < .05$ ) was found between student achievement and effective school leadership. This translates to one standard deviation increase in principal leadership behavior corresponding with a 10% gain in student achievement on a norm reference test (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004).

In performing a meta-analysis, Leithwood (1994) provided a synthesis of 34 published and unpublished empirical and formal case studies conducted in elementary and secondary schools. Twenty-one of the 34 studies relate to specific dimensions of transformational leadership in schools; six of these are qualitative and 15 are quantitative studies. Evidence about the effects of leadership is provided by 20 of the 34 studies and included the following: effects on students, effects on perceptions of leaders, effects on behavior of members of the organization, effects on members of the organization' psychological states, and organization-level effects. School reform and accountability reforms have increasingly demanded that school systems improve students' academic

performance; therefore, there has been much research about the link between principalship and school effectiveness. These reforms have ensured that principals focus on student academic improvement; however, there is not a set plan on how to accomplish the goal for all students' learning and academically achieving. High-stakes standardized testing, such as the PASS has been established as an effective way to measure student achievement, and also teacher quality and principals' effectiveness.

### **Summary**

Researchers have attempted to determine the leadership process and establish relationships between leadership styles, socioeconomic status, and student achievement. Early researchers concluded that there was a relationship between principal leadership styles and student achievement (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Edington & Di Benedetto, 1988; Ewing, 2001; Epps, 2002). Studies have also found that there is a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement (Alsbaugh, 1992; Mandeville & Anderson, 1987; Guskey & Kifer, 1990; Fleming & Malone, 1993). The focus of this study is the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, and the any association to student achievement. With all schools focusing on one goal, student achievement, it is important to determine if one leadership style strongly supports student achievement in high socioeconomic schools or Title I schools. The purpose of this study is to determine which of the three leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire is preferred in South Carolina's. Title I, middle schools.

In this section of the paper, the researcher has attempted to outline the full range leadership model. The influential works of Burns, Bass, and Avolio have provided the

foundation and a perspective from which to examine current educational leadership. The terms leadership and leadership styles were briefly examined and how these concepts have developed through the contributions of key scholars, now forces us to question what makes an educational leader and what effects these individuals have on student achievement. There have been many shifts in school policies which bring shifts in school leadership. Effective educational leaders do more than work to simply maintain the organization's daily processes. Their leadership behaviors affect their organizational goal of student achievement.

The literature review examined the three featured leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire and reviewed related studies associating leadership styles to student achievement. This section summarizes the relevant findings and groundwork for examining the preferred principals' leadership styles and possible association to student achievement as measured by the PASS in Title I, middle schools in South Carolina.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

This study examines three research questions regarding the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible relationship to student learning outcomes as measured by the 2013 PASS test. The researcher utilized a descriptive-quantitative research design based on principals' responses on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X).

Chapter II provided a review of literature relevant to the three featured leadership styles; transformational, transactional, and laissez faire. The chapter also provides a review of literature relevant to leadership styles and student achievement. The chapter was divided into three sections; theoretical leadership framework, leadership styles, and leadership style association to student achievement. The chapter summarized the relevant findings and established a foundation examining the preferred leadership styles of Title I middle school principals and association to student achievement.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research questions, communicates the methods and procedures for data collection, instrumentation, and participant selection. The chapter is organized by the following sections: (a) research design, (b) data collection instrument, (c) data collection procedure, (d) data analysis, (e) research questions, (f) sample, and (g) summary of methodology.

## **Research Design**

For this study, the researcher asked the participants, SC, Title I, middle school principals, to complete the MLQ-5X questionnaire. The researcher designed demographic questions to collect data which included sex, ethnicity and years of experience.

The dependent variable of the self-perceived principal leadership style was measured using the MLQ instrument. The independent variables, which include the demographic variables, principals' sex, experience, and ethnicity, were also examined. Data were gathered using the online version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Leader Form 5x-Short survey with added demographic questions. The MLQ has been previously assessed for reliability and validity. There were 12 surveys sent out to principals and six surveys were returned. Items left blank by a respondent were eliminated as a missing value by the statistical package, and not calculated into the mean scores. When a participant skipped one or more items, the survey was not included in the final data set.

The MLQ was developed by Bass (1990) to assess transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. The MLQ has been revised throughout the years, which strengthens its reliability and validity (Bass & Avolio, 2000). The MLQ survey is commercially available and copyrighted. It is a self-rated survey questionnaire using a 5-point Likert-type scale that asks respondents to rate their level of agreement with various statements concerning leadership. The 5-point Likert-type scale is rated 0 meaning "Not at all", 1 meaning "Once in a while", 2 meaning "Sometimes", 3 meaning "Fairly Often" and 4 which means "Frequently, if not always". The MLQ contains 45 questions that obtain information in nine leadership scales and three leadership outcomes. The nine



leadership scales include idealized influence (attributed), intellectual stimulation, idealized influence (behavior), inspirational motivation, individual consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception (active), management-by-exception (passive), and laissez-faire styles (Avolio, Bass, Jung, 1999; Bass, 1990).

The instrument used five scales to measure transformational leadership factors, three scales to measure transactional leadership factors, and one to measure laissez-faire (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The questionnaire takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The MLQ can be used to collect categorical data from respondents based on their positioning in the various dimensions measured by the instrument with the categories identifying the participants as transactional, transformational, or laissez-faire leaders. The questionnaire was administered online to middle school principals in Title I, middle schools in South Carolina. The questionnaire contains 45 statements designed to measure the leadership styles of leaders. The styles will be measured under the constructs of transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant or laissez-faire (Tepper & Percy, 1999).

### **Validity of the MLQ**

Validity considers whether the research design, instruments, and procedures accurately assess the variables or constructs that the research process is intended to measure. Validity consists of the separate elements of internal and external validity. Internal validity examines the research design, instruments used for measurements, and the variables included and excluded in the study to assess the rigor of the methodology. It also considers the degree that the research design considers confounding variables.

Internal validity speaks to the accuracy of the results. External validity considers whether the research design supports the generalization of the findings and conclusions of the study to a larger population. External validity examines the sampling procedures and the setting in which the data is collected (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). The development of the MLQ instrument has been ongoing since its introduction. The validity of the MLQ has continued to be a question over the period of its use. Studies of the MLQ's validity and internal consistency have demonstrated that it is effective in identifying transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles, though the scaling methods are somewhat modified (Den Hartog, Van Muijen & Koopman, 1997). These modifications have decreased the number of items within the scale and increased the determinant validity of the test. The development of this instrument is still ongoing, and it has been adapted to a wide range of other contexts, but it continues to be one of the most widely used instruments for identifying leadership characteristics and leadership styles.

Previous researchers have established the validity of the MLQ by using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess constructs validity (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Antonakis (2003) conducted a study that also supported the nine-factor leadership model and its stability in homogenous situations. This study found the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) to be .05 and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) .905 for the full nine factors. The CFA of the MLQ found a significant improvement ( $P < .001$ ) and the inter-correlations among higher factors presented evidence of discriminate validity (Antonakis et al., 2003). Based on the previous assessment, the MLQ instrument is valid for assessing the leadership constructs it purports to measure, which are the use of transformational, transactional or laissez-faire

styles of leadership. Because the validity of the MLQ has been established, instrument validity will not pose a significant threat to the findings and conclusions of the study.

The primary threat to internal validity in the research design is the sampling procedure, which creates the potential for bias in the selection of participants. As a result, the principals used as participants in the research may not be representative of the general population of principals in schools. Another threat to internal validity of the study is the possibility that the participants will not be candid or accurate in their responses to the MLQ survey questionnaire because they are aware that they are the participants of leadership research. The assurances of confidentiality provided to the participants of the study, as well as the procedures to protect confidentiality, partially mediate this threat to internal validity.

The primary threat to the external validity of the study is the selection-method interaction. The selection of the participants for participation in the study does not use a probabilistic method, because all school principals meeting the inclusion criterion of holding positions in South Carolina, Title I, middle schools.

Reliability examines the instruments used for data collection to determine whether the instrument collects data accurately and consistently in different subject populations. Reliability indicates to what extent an instrument consistently yields the same result. The coefficient alpha of the MLQ is .93. For each of the nine leadership factor scales, the reliability of the MLQ is between .74 and .94 based on Cronbach's alpha and has been established by previous researchers (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2008). A Cronbach alpha correlation above .70 is sufficient to establish reliability for instruments measuring

psychometric attributes (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). The reliability for the MLQ and demographic data, using the study's target population, is reported in Chapter 4.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedure involved one phase of obtaining data from principals by administering an online version of the MLQ Leader Form 5x-Short survey with the additional demographic questions included. An initial letter of invitation was sent electronically to principals of the schools in the South Carolina. The email addresses of the principals were secured from the South Carolina Department of Education. The first email included a description of the study and its purpose. It also indicated that participation in the study would require completion of the MLQ survey, with the addition of the demographic questions, and a link to the survey was included in this email. The email included assurances of confidentiality to encourage participation in the study. A follow-up email was sent to participants in the study thanking them for their participation and encouraging those who had not participated to do so. This procedure was used to increase the number of principals willing to participate in the study.

The researcher established a two-week timeline and used electronic collection of the MLQ data to reduce cost and increase time efficiency. Participants used the link provided in the email to electronically access the MLQ instrument through the hosting organization, Mind Garden. Brief instructions about how to fill out the survey were provided and the demographic questions were incorporated into one online survey. To avoid influencing their responses, the researcher did not provide the participants with any other information about the instrument or its purpose. The data from the survey instrument were collected after three weeks. Mind Garden provided the researcher an

Excel file with the data. Participant anonymity was ensured as the survey did not collect any personal identification data and no information beyond the survey data was passed to the researcher, or any third party, as provisioned in Mind Garden's Privacy Statement. Prior to organizing and analyzing the data, preliminary screening was conducted to detect the existence of outliers, missing data, and to ensure the data were ready for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive research is a type of quantitative research involving measured descriptions of educational phenomena (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The researcher in this study utilized a descriptive quantitative method to examine the possible relationship of the demographic variables, including principal gender, experience, and ethnicity. Quantitative research provides a snapshot picture of current conditions and is primarily concerned with interpreting present relationships through disciplined inquiry (Best & Kahn, 2003; Reaves, 1992).

The MLQ-5X provided data about the leadership styles of the principals, and the collected data enabled the researcher to evaluate the preferred leadership styles.

Student achievement was assessed using the ELA and math PASS scores. The South Carolina PASS is a statewide assessment administered to students in grades four through eight to test proficiency in ELA, math, science, and social studies. The PASS test items are aligned to the standards for each subject and grade level. Standards outline what schools are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn and include indicators that are statements of the specific cognitive processes and the content knowledge and skills that students must demonstrate to meet the grade-level standards.

PASS test items are written to assess the content knowledge and skills described in the academic standards and indicators.

Students' PASS results were gathered from the school report cards. The school report card is an annual report to stakeholders. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required each state to produce an annual report card that summarizes assessment results of students statewide and disaggregated by student groups. Information must also be included on high school graduation rates, teacher qualifications, other indicators used in each state's definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and the AYP status of all schools and districts in the state. For this study, principal's leadership styles positively effecting student's achievement was defined as 80% of students scoring met or above on the ELA and math SCPASS test, which is the normal measurement within most districts.

The PASS scores were collected using the South Carolina Department of Education's website. The MLQ-5X questionnaire results and PASS scores provided information necessary in determining the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible relationship to student achievement.

### **Research Questions**

The research in this study utilized the MLQ-5X questionnaire and student PASS data from the South Carolina State Report Cards to address the following research questions.

1. Is there a preferred leadership style of principals in Title I middle schools in South Carolina?
2. Does leadership style have an association to students' achievement as measured by the South Carolina Palmetto Assessments of State Standards?
3. Is there a relationship between leadership styles and select demographic factors, sex, race and experience?

## Sample

Purposeful sampling was used for the selection of the sample population based on the geographic location of the principals within school districts in South Carolina.

Purposeful sampling selects the participants of the study based on inclusion criteria related to the research questions and hypotheses of the study (Gliner & Morgan, 2000).

The primary inclusion criterion for the sampling was geographic location, Title I middle schools, number of years of experience, of which three or more were spent leading in the same school. This selection criterion was established to attribute principal and school characteristics to the self-perceived principal leadership style.

Table 3.1

### *Variable Grid*

Research Questions	Data Source	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistical Description
R1. Is there a preferred leadership style of principals in Title I middle schools in South Carolina?	MLQ-5X results	Principals	MLQ-5X results	Mean Standard Deviation
R2. Is there a relationship between South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals' preferred leadership style and math and reading achievement as measured by the PASS test?	PASS results MLQ-5X results	Principal's MLQ-5X results  PASS results	Students' achievement	Mean Standard Deviation
R3. Is there a relationship between South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals' preferred leadership style and select demographic indicators sex, race, and experience?	Demographic questions	Principals' demographic questions results		Mean Standard Deviation

The population of this study was South Carolina public school Title I middle school principals. South Carolina public schools have 255 middle schools, of which 72

are Title I schools. There are more than 600,000 students enrolled in the South Carolina, Title I, middle schools. Schools are designated Title I based on the percentage of students receiving free and reduced price lunches.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined according to their use in this study:

*No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*: NCLB is an authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a federal law that affects k-12 education (South Carolina Department Education, 2004).

*Standardized tests*: A standardized test is administered under standardized or controlled conditions that address specify where, when, how, and for how long children respond to the questions. In standardized tests, the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent (Kohn, 2000).

*Student achievement*: Student achievement is academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores (e.g. state assessments, PASS).

*PASS: Palmetto Assessment of State Standards*: a statewide assessment administered to South Carolina students in grades three through eighth (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013).

*Title I schools*: Schools with a large low income student population. Schools with large percentages of students receiving free or reduced price lunches (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013).

*Title I funds*: Federal funds aimed to bridge the gap between low income students and other students. The U.S. Department of Education provides supplemental funding to local school districts to meet the needs of at-risk and low income students (sc.gov).



*SES or socioeconomic status:* Socioeconomic status is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation (Lee & Madyum, 2009).

*Instructional leadership:* A leadership style concentrating on supervision, coordinating, controlling, developing curriculum, and instruction (Hallinger, 2003).

*Principal leadership style:* The behavior patterns that a principal uses to influence, coordinate, and support the work of others in an effort to achieve a goal (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

*Transformational leadership:* A leadership style with the goal of transforming members of the organization into motivated leaders (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The transformational leader gains trust and respect from members of the organization by leading by example (Bass, 1998). The foundation of transformational leadership is high expectations for members of the organization (Mulford, 2008).

*Transactional leadership:* A leadership style using rewards or punishments to obtain appropriate/desired behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 2004). "...such leaders emphasize extrinsic motivations to shape goal setting in an attempt to strengthen organizational culture, structure, and strategy..." (Bucic, Robinson & Ramburuth, 2009, p. 231).

*Laissez-faire or passive avoidant leadership:* A leadership style that is more passive and reactive. "...passive leaders avoid specifying agreements, clarifying expectations, and providing goals and standards to be achieved by followers..." (Bass & Avolio, 2004, p. 96). This style of leadership has been classified as a no leadership style (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

*MLQ-5X- Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*: Questionnaire developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio to determine the degree to which leaders exhibited transformational and transactional leadership.

### **Instrumentation: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire**

The MLQ-5X measures a broad range of leadership types from passive leaders, to leaders who give contingent rewards, to followers, to leaders who transform their followers into becoming leaders themselves (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Categorical descriptors of leadership include transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire are assessed by the MLQ.

The MLQ form 5X was developed in 1995 by Avolio and Bass to measure leadership behaviors. This instrument is a 45 item questionnaire constructed using a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents rate their leadership behaviors and characteristics with qualifiers that range from not at all, to frequently, if not always. This instrument was developed for the empirical measurement of leadership styles, particularly transformational leadership. The MLQ-5X measures nine leadership qualities that comprise three leadership styles. According to Avolio and his associates (1995), the instrument is the most commonly used and widely accepted measure of transformational leadership behavior available today. The MLQ has gained recognition for its accurate measurement of leaders. Reliabilities' for each leadership factor scale ranged from .74 to .94 (Avolio & Bass, 1995).

Effective transformational leaders exhibit the following measurable behaviors as defined by the questionnaire: Idealized influence (IIA and IIB), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individual consideration (IC). Idealized influence

refers to a leader who acts and is perceived as a strong role model for followers. The leader is respected and trusted by followers and provides a sense of both mission and vision that members of the organization want to follow. It also includes the subset of behaviors: (IIIA) and idealized influence behavior IIB (EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research, 2004; Bogler et al., 2007). Inspirational motivation (IM) refers to a leader who communicates high expectation for performance. The leader inspires members of the organization to pursue a shared vision over individual self-interests. Intellectual stimulation (IS) refers to a leader who stimulates and encourages both creativity and innovation. The leader provides an environment fostering empowerment and new approaches to problem solving. Individual consideration (IC) refers to a leader who actively listens to and cares about the individual needs of followers. The leader acts as a mentor or coach and provides attention and direction to followers' individuality (EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research, 2004).

Transactional leadership has three measurable leadership behaviors as delineated by the test; contingent reward (CR), management-by-exception active (MBEA), and management-by-exception passive (MBEP). Contingent reward refers to a leader who achieves agreement and performance from followers through negotiated exchange. Management-by-exception refers to a leader who uses corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement to encourage followers to achieve outcomes. This can be with either active or passive (EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research, 2004).

Laissez-faire (LF) represents non leadership behavior. According to EDUCAUSE Center for applied Research (2004), laissez-faire leadership minimizes

interactions with members of the organization and encourages members to think creatively with minimal intervention, feedback or support.

The MLQ-5X, developed by Avolio and Bass (1995) was used to collect data for this study. Demographic data on the participants was also collected using a questionnaire. The PASS, a criterion referenced test aligned with the South Carolina Curriculum Standards, scores for South Carolina, Title I, middle school students were used to measure student achievement in ELA and mathematics. The PASS scores were obtained from the South Carolina Department of Education web site. Each of these instruments will be described in the following sections.

Table 3.2

*Items for Each Leadership Subscale on the MLQ Leader Form 5x-Short*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Subscales</b>	<b>Survey Questions #'s</b>
Transformational	Idealized Attributes	10, 18, 21, 25
Transformational	Idealized Influence	6, 14, 23, 34
Transformational	Inspirational Motivation	9, 13, 26, 36
Transformational	Intellectual Stimulation	2, 8, 30, 32
Transformational	Individualized Consideration	15, 19, 29, 31
Transactional	Contingent Reward	1, 11, 16, 35
Transactional	Management by Exception	4, 22, 24, 27
Transactional	Management by Exception	3, 12, 17, 20
Laissez-Faire	Passive Avoidant	5, 7, 28, 33

*Note. Each characteristic of leadership is measured as a separate subscale. The total number of survey items is 45.*

### **Validity and Reliability**

The validity of an instrument means that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The validity of the MLQ-5X (short form) was based on a subset of

the long form items; therefore, validity may be inferred from the validity of the long form.

Validity considers whether the research design, instruments, and procedures accurately assess the variables or constructs the research process intends to measure. Validity consists of the separate elements of internal and external validity. Internal validity examines the research design, instruments used for measurements, and the variables included and excluded in the study to assess the rigor of the methodology. External validity considers whether the research design supports the generalization of the findings and conclusions of the study to a larger population. External validity examines the sampling procedures and the setting in which the data is collected (Gliner & Morgan, 2000).

The development of the MLQ instrument has been ongoing since its introduction. The validity of the MLQ has continued to be a question over the period of its use. Other studies of the MLQ's validity and internal consistency have demonstrated that it is effective in identifying transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles, though the scaling methods are somewhat modified (Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997). These modifications have decreased the number of items within the scale and increased the determinant validity of the test. The development of this instrument is still ongoing, and it has been adapted to a wide range of other contexts, but it continues to be one of the most widely used instruments used to identify leadership characteristics and leadership styles.

Previous researchers have established the validity of the MLQ by using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to assess construct validity (Antonakis, Avolio, &

Sivasubramaniam, 2003). For instance, Antonakis (2003) conducted a study that also supported the nine-factor leadership model and its stability in homogenous situations. This study found the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) to be .05 and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) at .905 for the full nine factors. The CFA of the MLQ found a significant improvement ( $P < .001$ ) and the intercorrelations among higher factors presented evidence of discriminate validity (Antonakis et al., 2003). Based on the previous assessment, the MLQ instrument is valid for assessing the leadership constructs it purports to measure, which are the use of transformational, transactional or laissez-faire styles of leadership. Because the validity of the MLQ has been established, instrument validity will not pose a significant threat to the findings and conclusions of the study.

The primary threat to internal validity in the research design is the sampling procedure, which creates the potential for bias in the selection of participants. As a result, the principals used as participants in the research may not be representative of the general population of principals in schools. Another threat to internal validity of the study from the research design is the possibility that the participants will not be candid or accurate in their responses to the MLQ survey questionnaire because they are aware that they are the participants of leadership research. This threat arises when a subject adopts behaviors or attitudes in a study situation that differ significantly from the behaviors and attitudes the subject normally uses. The assurances of confidentiality provided to the participants of the study, as well as the procedures to protect confidentiality, partially mediate this threat to internal validity.

The primary threat to the external validity of the study is the selection-method interaction. The selection of the participants for participation in the study does not use a

probabilistic method. A confounding variable related to the schools in the counties under investigation could influence the findings and conclusions of the study, reducing the ability to generalize the findings to a larger population. The threat to validity is low because the data were collected from the principals by accessing an online version of the MLQ Leader Form 5x.

Reliability examines the instruments used for data collection to determine whether the instrument collects data accurately and consistently in different subject populations. Reliability indicates to what extent an instrument consistently yields the same result. The coefficient alpha of the MLQ is .93. For each of the nine leadership factor scales, the reliability of the MLQ is between .74 and .94 based on Cronbach's alpha and has been established by previous researchers (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2008). A Cronbach alpha correlation above .70 is sufficient to establish reliability for instruments measuring psychometric attributes (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). The reliability for the MLQ and demographic data is reported in Chapter 4.

The MLQ provides reliable, valid, and well-normed information about intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction level using 20 items. Avolio (1995) indicated that more than 200 researchers in Doctoral or Master's degree programs have used the MLQ-5X since 1990, thus highlighting its continued relevance as a research tool.

### **Data Collection/Analysis**

The following steps were taken to gather the data necessary to conduct this study. First, the publishers and copyright holders of the material granted permission to use the MLQ-5X in this study. The Socioeconomic status or title I schools were collected from the district websites. The superintendent of participating South Carolina Public School

Districts were contacted and asked permission to conduct research. The letter encouraged participation by explaining the purpose of the study and the assurance of anonymity of participants (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Once procedures were established, the necessary requirements to conduct research within the district were completed.

The principals from each participating South Carolina Title I middle South Carolina, Title I, middle school were contacted via email, telephone, or site visit for the purposes of explaining and gathering support for the study. They were informed of the study and its purpose, assured of the confidentiality of the responses, and invited to submit questions via fax or email. The principals were informed that confirmation had been received from the district prior to distribution of questionnaire at their school.

A total of 72 South Carolina, Title I, middle schools were surveyed. Once permission was obtained from the principal, email coded instrumentation packets and human subject participant consent forms were assembled and emailed to participating schools. As a follow-up, the researcher wrote a personalized note to the principals to thank them for donating their valuable time and for their commitment to participating in the study. Each principal received an emailed packet including a cover letter outlining directions for completing questionnaires, the informed consent form, one MLQ-X questionnaire, one demographics questionnaire. No names or grade levels were placed on the questionnaires.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The previous chapter presented the following research questions: Is there a preferred leadership style of principals in Title I. middle schools in South Carolina? Does leadership style have an association to students' achievement as measured by the South Carolina Palmetto Assessments of State Standards? Is there a relationship between leadership styles and select demographic factors; sex, race and experience? The previous chapter also communicated the methods and procedures for data collection. The instruments used, MLQ form 5X questionnaire and the participating school report cards, and participant selection, the participants were SC Title I middle school principals with 3-5 years' experience in the same position at the same school. The chapter was organized into the following sections: (a) research design, (b) data collection instrument, (c) data collection procedure, (d) data analysis, (e) research questions, (f) sample, and (g) summary of methodology.

Chapter four presents the data collected regarding the preferred self-perceived leadership style(s) of SC, Title I, middle school principals and possible association with students' academic achievement as measured by the PASS. At the time of this study, there are 601 Title I schools in South Carolina; however, 62 are Title I middle schools and 4 of those are not true middle schools with the 6 – 8<sup>th</sup> grades configuration.

When the researcher contacted all of the school districts in South Carolina, four school districts (Greenville, Lee, Chester, and Williamsburg school districts) declined the

request to participate in the study. After researching participating districts, 12 of the Title I middle school principals met the criterion of having three or more years' experience in the same school. PASS data was collected using the South Carolina State Report cards for the remaining 12 principals. Six of the principals (50%) completed the MLQ 5X. The participating principals were from Charleston, Berkley, and Beaufort school districts. Survey demographics regarding the principals indicated two of the six participants were males and four were females. One of the participants was white, and five of the participants were black. One hundred percent of the participants had 3 – 5 years' experience as middle school principals working at the same school.

### **Demographics of Sample**

The purpose of this study was to determine the preferred self-perceived leadership style(s) of SC Title I middle school principals and possible association with students' academic achievement as measured by the PASS tests. It is important to note that the researcher in this study examined transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles and PASS data from the South Carolina school report cards.

The MLQ-5X questionnaire and student PASS data from the South Carolina State School Report Cards were utilized to address the following research questions.

1. Is there a preferred self-perceived leadership style(s) of principals in Title I, middle schools in South Carolina?
2. Does leadership style have an association to students' achievement as measured by the South Carolina Palmetto Assessments of State Standards?
3. Is there a relationship between leadership styles and select demographic variables, sex, race and experience?

The 2014 South Carolina Department of Education School Report Cards, of principals completing this survey, were examined to determine the percentage of students scoring met or above on the ELA and Math PASS assessments.

### **Research Question One**

Is there a preferred self-perceived leadership style of principals in Title I middle schools in South Carolina?

This research question was addressed using the MLQ-5X survey. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, for participating school districts in South Carolina. The principals' self-perceptions of their leadership styles is presented in Table 4.1. The MLQ-5X indicated that six school principals perceived their leadership style as transformational. This was indicated by the mean scores for all five transformational subscales. The transactional subscales, suggestive of management-by-exception and laissez-faire subscales, received low mean scores. This indicates that principals did not perceive themselves as having transactional or passive/avoidant leadership styles.

Table 4.1, Descriptive Statistics for the Response by Principals on the MLQ Form 5x, illustrates the mean scores for the transformational subscales ranged from 2.98 to 3.63. The subscale of Idealized Influence Behaviors, received a mean score of 3.22. This score was calculated by using the mean for all participants for that subscale. The mean for each participant was added and divided by the number of items. The result was the mean score for the subscale. Table 4.1, demonstrates that males scored a mean of 4.0 on the subscale, Idealized Influence Behaviors, and females a mean of 3.15.

Table 4.1 indicates that principals in this study perceived their leadership style to be transformational. This may be due partly to the self-perception feature of the survey. The participants were limited to a range of responses and may not have selected their desired response. The results may also indicate that principals in this study recognize the importance of the characteristics of transformational leaders and potential impact on student achievement (Robinson et al., 2008).

Table 4.1

*Descriptive Statistics for the Responses by Principals on the MLQ-5X (n=6)*

Leadership Subscales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Transformational Subscales		
Idealized Influence Attributes	3.22	.15
Idealized Influence Behaviors	3.43	.36
Inspirational Motivation	3.63	.29
Intellectual Stimulation	3.23	.25
Individualized Consideration	2.98	.20
Transactional Subscales		
Contingent Reward	3.07	.20
Management-by-exception: active	2.18	.50
Management-by-exception: passive	0.43	.31
Passive Avoidance Subscale		
Laissez-faire	0.35	.22

*Note: The mean scores for the transformational subscales ranged from 2.98 to 3.63. The transactional subscale ranged from 0.43 – 3.07. The passive avoidance subscales was 0.35 (on a scale from 0 - 4).*

The lower mean scores in the transactional subscales, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire subscales may indicate these participants make a conscious effort to avoid using leadership behaviors associated with laissez-faire leadership and negative reinforcement (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Bass and Riggio, 2006). The results of the survey suggested that the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals is transformational leadership style.

### **Research Question Two**

Does leadership style have an association to students' achievement as measured by the South Carolina Palmetto Assessments of State Standards tests?

Table 4.2 indicates that the participating principals perceive themselves as transformational leaders. School report cards of participating principals showed 42.5%-68.2% of students scored met or exemplary on the PASS ELA and math tests. The researcher set an acceptable goal of 80%, which is the generally accepted district standard, of students scoring met or exemplary on the PASS tests, ELA and math. The data from Table 4.2 is from the schools' report cards. Each principal's PASS scores were examined. Scores for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades were gathered. The mean of the percentage of students that scored met or above in a subject was calculated. For example; principal #1, 43.7% of the students scored met, (near or on grade level), and proficient (on or above grade level) in ELA. Principal #2; 61.6 % of the student scored met, (near or on grade level), and proficient (on or above grade level) in ELA. Principal #2 had an average transformation score of 3.7 out of a possible 4.0. The acceptable goal of 80% of students scoring met or above was not meet; therefore, it is determined that there is no association between leadership style and student achievement.

Transformational leaders may use motivation as a vital component of leading and working with members of the organization to motivate and bring about changes which may influence student achievement positively (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In this study, the percentage of students scoring met or exemplary on the PASS ELA and math, may indicate that principals are less involved as instructional leader and/or fail to make known their expectations of teachers which may have an effect on the success of students (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Table 4.2

*Principal Leadership Style and Association to Student Achievement*

Principals	Percentage of students scoring met or above on PASS (ELA)	Percentage of students scoring met or above on PASS (math)	Self-Perceived Leadership style	Transformational Mean score
# 1	43.7	61.6	Transformational	3.7
# 2	60.5	65.3	Transformational	3.4
# 3	62.3	61.6	Transformational	3.4
# 4	42.5	47.6	Transformational	3.2
# 5	63.5	60.4	Transformational	2.3
# 6	58.8	68.2	Transformational	3.7

*\*Note: Participating SC middle school PASS scores (ELA and math) show no association to leadership style and student achievement.*

### **Research Question Three**

Is there a relationship between leadership styles and select demographic variables, sex, race and experience?

One variable addressed by the survey was sex. There were two transformational subscales that indicated a significant difference with regard to sex; Individualized

Consideration and Intellectual Stimulation. This finding may suggest that female principals, in this study, self-perceived capacity to coach and encourage staff, more than their male counterparts. Male principals' results were higher in four of five transformational leadership subscales. Overall, these results may confirm that male principals perceive their style of leadership to be transformational at the foundation, and recognize the significance of leadership style to effectively lead a school and maintain and grow in the role of instructional leader (Eagly, Johanneson-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

Table 4.3 indicates that female principals' results were higher in two of three transactional leadership subscales. Female leaders perceived their leadership style as more transactional than male principals. Female principals may comprehend the need to integrate transactional and transformational leadership styles to be a more effective leader (Blunt & Jones, 2007, Bass, 1995). In 2005, a yearlong study was conducted by Caliper, a management firm. This study focused on women in leadership and their characteristics. The study concluded that women were more influential and more inclined to be team builders,, which are both traits that are part of the transformational leadership style (Lowen, 2011). The study also concluded that women were more task-oriented (Lowen, 2011). The result of that study confirmed that males scored higher in transformational leadership subscales and females scored higher in transactional leadership subscales.

Table 4.3

*Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Sex and Leadership Subscales*

Subscales	Sex	Mean	Standard Deviation Between Males and Females
<i><b>Transformational Subscales</b></i>			
Idealized Influence Attributes	Male	3.25	.01
	Female	3.2	
Idealized Influence Behaviors	Male	4	.12
	Female	3.15	
Inspirational Motivation	Male	3.9	.28
	Female	3.5	
Intellectual Stimulation	Male	3.4	.35
	Female	2.9	
Individualized Consideration	Male	3.25	.33
	Female	2.78	
<i><b>Transactional Subscales</b></i>			
Contingent Reward	Male	2.5	.33
	Female	2.98	
Management-by-exception: active	Male	.9	.79
	Female	2.03	
Management-by-exception: passive	Male	.65	.32
	Female	0.2	
<i><b>Passive Avoidance Subscale</b></i>			
Laissez-faire	Male	3.85	2.5
	Female	0.2	

*\*Note: 2 males and 4 females answered the MLQ-5X questionnaire. Males scored higher in transformational subscales. Females scored higher in transactional subscales.*

The second part of question three relates to South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals' ethnicity. There were five black and one white participant. Table 4.4 indicates that the white participant scored higher in the five transformational subscales than black participants in this study. This may suggest that the white principal perceived his/her leadership style to be more transformational than black principals. For example, Table 4.4 indicates that black, Title I, middle school principals had a mean score of 3.32 and the



white participant scored 4.0 in the idealized influence behaviors transformational subset.

No Hispanic principals participated in this study.

Table 4.4

*Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Ethnicity and Leadership Subscales*

Subscales	Ethnicity	Mean	Standard Deviation Between White and Black
<i>Transformational Subscales</i>			
Idealized Influence Attributes	White	3.5	.24
	Black	3.16	
Idealized Influence Behaviors	White	4.0	.48
	Black	3.32	
Intellectual Stimulations	White	3.8	.47
	Black	3.12	
Inspirational Motivational	White	3.8	.47
	Black	3.12	
Individualized Consideration	White	3.3	.26
	Black	2.92	
<i>Transactional Subscales</i>			
Contingent Reward	White	3.5	.36
	Black	2.98	
Management by Exception-Active	White	2.50	.26
	Black	2.12	
Management by Exception-Passive	White	.80	.31
	Black	.36	
	White		
<i>Passive Avoidance Subscale</i>			
Laissez-faire	White	.80	.31
	Black	.36	

\*Note: 1 White and 5 Black participants answered the MLQ-5X questionnaire. The White participant scored higher in transformational subscales.

In this study, the white principal scored higher in the transformational leadership subscales, but little research has been conducted on the ethnicity of leaders and leadership style; however, student ethnicity has been widely studied (Fitzgerald, 2007). Wong (1998) demonstrated that cultural differences of leaders have an impact on leadership styles.

The third part of question three relates to participant's years of experience as a school principal in the same school. In this study, all of the participants had 3-5 years of experience. Increased effectiveness is usually associated with increased years of experience (Bettin & Kennedy, 1990).

However, this study did not specify what type of administrative experience, only the number of years' experience principals had in the same school. Table 4.5 indicates that all had 3-5 years' experience and all principals perceived themselves as transformational leaders. For example, Table 45 indicates for the transformational subscale, Idealized Influence Behaviors, the mean scores for the participants was 3.63. There may be a relationship between leadership style and years of experience; all participants in the study were transformational leaders.

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to determine the preferred self-perceived leadership style(s) of SC, Title I, middle school principals and possible association to students' academic achievement as measured by the PASS test. Descriptive statistics mean, and standard deviation, were used in this study. Based on a sample size of six principals, the self-perceived leadership style was transformational with no significant association to student achievement.

Table 4.5

*Principals Years of Experience and Leadership Subscales*

	Number of years	Mean
<b><i>Transformational Subscales</i></b>		
Idealized Influence Attributes	3 -5 years	3.22
Idealized Influence Behaviors	3 -5 years	3.63
Intellectual Stimulation	3 -5 years	3.23
Inspirational Motivation	3 -5 years	3.63
Individualized Consideration	3 -5 years	2.99
<b><i>Transactional Subscales</i></b>		
Contingent Reward	3 -5 years	3.07
Management by exception – active	3 -5 years	2.18
Management by exception – passive	3 -5 years	.043
<b><i>Passive Avoidance Subset</i></b>		
Laissez-faire	3 -5 years	.35

Previous studies concluded that principals have both direct and indirect effects on student achievement by playing a central role in conditions, developing school instruction, and maintaining positive school and community relationships. The correlation between principals and student performance appears to be simple and straightforward in theory; in practice, it is multi-layered and unpredictable.

There are studies which confirm the existence of a relationship between school leadership style and student performance. Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003) found that principals' leadership styles have a positive effect on student achievement and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) reported that principals' leadership styles

significantly increased student achievement. Kruger, Witziers, and Sleegers (2007) found that principals indirectly influence student achievement. Cyprus, Kythreotis and Pashiardis (2006) found direct effects of the principal's leadership style on student achievement and Kythreotis, Pashiardis, and Kyriakides (2010) reached the conclusion that "the principal human leadership frame affects student achievement" (p. 232). Hallinger and Heck (1998) reviewed over 40 empirical studies conducted between 1980 and 1995 and concluded that principals had a small, statistically significant, indirect impact on student achievement.

Alternatively, some studies found no association between principals' leadership styles and student achievement. Di Vincenzo's (2008) research determined whether the practice of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors consistently contribute to higher levels of student achievement as reflected in the results of standardized tests. He found no statistically significant associative relationship between the leaders' leadership styles as determined by Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes, 2003) survey instrument and student achievement as determined by standardized test results. Using Bass and Avolio's (1994) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Huffman (2003) found no relationship between leadership styles (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) and improved student achievement. These conclusions were in line with this study's results.

This disassociation of leadership styles and student achievement may be partially based on principals not being educational experts; principals often have less expertise than the teachers they supervise. Furthermore, some principals perceive their role to be

administrative and distance themselves from the classroom environment and leave pedagogical issues to teachers, master teachers, and supervisors.

This study found that the preferred leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals was transformational; however, there was no association to student achievement as measured by PASS tests. Transformational leadership may focus more on the relationship between leaders and followers than on the educational work of school leadership; however, these relationships are not predictors of student achievement. Marks and Printy (2003) conducted a qualitative-quantitative study of 24 schools in the United States and found that transformational leadership is a necessary and effective instructional leadership component, an integral part of the principals' leadership style; therefore, instruction is the principal focus that directly affects student achievement (Cotton, 2003).

When transformational leadership and instructional leadership coexist in an integrated form of leadership, the influence on school performance, measured by the quality of its pedagogy and the achievement of its students may be substantial.

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary of Significant Findings**

This study analyzed the self-perceived leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible association to students' academic achievement. The study focused on three leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The preferred self-perceived leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals is the transformational leadership style. The transformational leadership style is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in the organization and members of the organization. Ideally, transformational leaders create valuable and positive change in the members of the organization with the goal of developing future leaders (Burns, 1978). The preferred style of these principals could be correlated to the location of the sample population as well as the socio-economic aspects of the school; the self-perceived characteristic of the survey; and limited range of responses.

This study found leadership style has no association to students' achievement as measured by the South Carolina Palmetto Assessments of State Standards. While this study did not prove an association between principal's leadership style and student achievement, Griffith (2003) found that principals' transformational leadership showed a strong, positive, and significant relation to school staff job satisfaction, which in turn, showed a moderate, positive and significant relation to the student achievement progress. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) found substantial effects of transformational leadership on

student engagement. Transformational leadership may lead to more satisfied and committed teachers who could subsequently influence student learning and school performance. However, in this study, South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals' transformational leadership style had no association to student achievement.

This study found there was no relationship between leadership styles and select demographic variables, sex, or race; however, there may be an association between leadership style and years of experience. The participants in the study had 3-5 years' experience. These relatively new principals may have a different definition of principals than veteran principals. The less experienced principal may strive to work with learning community members to create a strong climate for instruction in their schools and stimulate leadership amongst the faculty. Research from the University of Minnesota and University of Toronto concluded that the more willing principals are to spread leadership around, the better for the students; therefore, effective leadership from all sources, principals, influential teachers, staff teams and others, is associated with better students' performance on math and ELA tests. The relationship is strong but indirect. The job of transforming schools to ensure that all students are college and career ready, requires principals that are able to spur others to become leaders and work toward a common goal. The transformation of schools also requires principals to create a positive climate for learning to occur.

### **Discussion of Results**

The purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible association with students' academic achievement. Data was collected using the MLQ 5X and school report cards.

The sample population included Title I middle school principals with three or more years' experience leading in the same school in South Carolina. Six principals (50%) completed the surveys. The school reports cards indicated that of the six principals that participated in this study, two schools had less than 50% of students scoring met or above on one of the PASS test (ELA and math), as rated on the South Carolina State Report Card.

According to survey results, all of the participants were considered transformational with some transitional factors. This may be explained by organizational situations forcing changes in self-perceived leadership style; such as, facing organizational situations brought by restructuring schools to produce college and career ready students. As principals are being charged with transforming schools, many believe that transformational leadership skills are well suited to the challenges of school restructuring (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). Recent studies about the effects of transformational leadership (Leithwood et al., 1993; Leithwood, 1994; Silins, 1994) suggest it contributes to reorganization and "teacher perceived" student outcomes. Principals may believe that attributes of transformational leadership style may help as they attempt to fulfill the goal of producing college and career ready students.

The survey's results may also be explained by principal's realization that schools' and/or districts' missions cannot be accomplish alone and delegate duties to accomplish goals. Transformational leadership style involves the process of leaders developing followers into leaders and ensuring effective leaders focused on the same goals. Developing leaders is a distinguishing characteristic of transformational leadership.



Burns, Bass, and Sergiovanni (2003) stated that transformational leaders work to leave behind an organization that is better positioned to accomplish set goals and/or missions.

The survey results may also be explained by principals visualizing themselves as being new, fresh, and innovative leaders of the school, accomplishing missions and/or goals of students achieving. Transformational leaders focus on core values, such as, integrity and fairness, which impact the school and learning community. Innovative school organizations have all members of the learning community equal but performing different roles at different times (Kelly, 1995). Most leaders visualize themselves as having attributes of an effective leader creating new innovative methods to achieve the goal of student achievement. The self-reporting nature of the study may also have played a role in the results.

Situations/conflicts facing the principals at the time may have also impacted their self-perceived leadership style. "People placed in charge of organizational improvements and change efforts advocate for the improvement strategies and process with which they are most comfortable and which match their own mental models," (Musselwhite, 2000, p.25).

The participants in the study were principals at the same school for an average of 3-5 years, which indicates a high turnover rate of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals. About 20% of principals new to a school leave within one or two years, leaving behind a school that generally continues on a downward academic slide after their departure (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). The principal turnover or "churn" has an effect on student achievement and low income schools, generally Title I schools. Title I schools are likely to experience the effects of the principal churn at greater rates than

other schools. High achieving principals tend to migrate to schools with higher income, higher achieving students, or fewer minority students (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Rebuilding momentum with a new principal takes time and effort and may take a new principal up to three years to gain positive momentum in math and ELA performance. During those years, students' academic growth may stall and students lose instructional time. Leading a school requires a multi-year investment. Stability is a prominent factor. Stable effective leadership has a positive effect on students, especially in Title I schools (Dinham, 2004). It takes principals an average of five years to exemplify the vision for the school, improve instructional quality, and fully implement practices that positively affect school performance. Although it is important to retain school leaders, the first priority is to ensure principals are effective in their role and decide how to keep great principals long enough to have an impact on students. Effective leaders transform, improve, and maintain the school organization (Coddling & Marc, 2002).

### **Limitations**

The researcher surveyed South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals. The findings were based on the MLQ form 5X survey of SC, Title I, middle school principals' leadership styles and the school report card to ascertain student PASS tests score in ELA and math.

The principal participation in this study was voluntary and could skew the results. Only 50% of the principals asked to participate completed the surveys. Selection may be a limitation of the study. The participants in the sample self-selected to participate on a voluntary basis. The participants who did not volunteer to participate might be different in important ways from the participants who volunteered. A disadvantage of voluntary

participation is the self-selection bias. For example, principals convinced that they were creative innovative leaders, or transformational leaders, before taking the survey might be more likely to participate. Self-selection bias may cause the sample to not be a representation of the population being studied, or exaggerate particular finding from the study. Despite this limitation in the study, voluntary participation has strengths. The participants were committed to take part in the study and provide more insight into the phenomenon being studied. Few studies have addressed the issue of Title I middle school principals' preferred leadership styles and association to student achievement. More research is needed with a larger diverse sample.

The participants were limited to the completion of the surveys and PASS data for the 2013-2014 school years. The participants' survey, MLQ Form 5X, statements/questions was answered using a Likert scale. The Likert Scale is an ordinal psychometric measurement of attitudes, beliefs and opinions. For each question/statement, participants must indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement in a multiple choice type format. The advantage of the Likert Scale is that it is the prevalent method for survey collection and easily understood. The participants do not provide yes or no answers; therefore, the participants do not decide on a particular topic, but respond in degrees of agreement. The survey allows for participants' neutral or undecided feelings. These responses are easy to code when accumulating data since a single number represents the participant's response. Surveys, like the MLQ, are versatile and can be sent out through mail, over the internet, or given in person. However, the Likert Scale gives only 5-7 options of choice, and the space between each choice cannot be equivalent. The survey may not truly measure the attitudes of participants. Many participants avoid

choosing the extreme options on the scale even if an extreme choice would be the most accurate. However, online surveys, like the MLQ, are positive overall.

Data was gathered from the schools' report cards to determine student achievement. School report cards are just one data point that does not fully capture all that happens in school building. Educational stakeholders are now more than ever focused on student achievement (Usdan, McCloud & Podmostko, 2000). Principals impact their students' outcomes, particularly at the most challenging schools. When looking at factors within a school it is estimated that principals are second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement (Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). A highly effective principal can increase his or her students' scores up to 10 percentile points on standardized tests in just one year (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Principals in low-achieving or high poverty, minority schools tend to have a greater impact on student outcomes than principals at less challenging schools (Leithwood, et al. 2004, Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). Unfortunately, principals typically transfer to less challenging schools as they gain experience (Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2011). An effective school principal will use report card data as a starting point to become an effective instructional leader. Effective principals are more likely to provide their teachers with the support and motivation they need to be effective teachers. For example, although both effective and ineffective principals claim to frequently observe their teachers, effective principals make more unscheduled observations and provide immediate feedback. The school report card, standardized test results are only one data point in measuring students' achievement or principals' leadership effectiveness.

Selection of principals was limited to South Carolina. The region was chosen based on the location of the researcher. Increasing numbers of studies also reveal that leadership styles interpret and evaluate differently depending on geographic location, configuration of schools, culture, and/or needs of the organization and followers (Jung & Avolio, 1999; Yamaguchi, 1999; Yokochi, 1989; Jogulu & Wood, 2008a).

Transformational and transactional leadership styles have a universal application because these models have the capacity to be adapted in different settings (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leadership promotes greater participation because followers are more likely to accept and identify with their leader's ideology due to high power distance and acceptance (Jung & Avolio, 1999). The participants in this study were found to be transformational leaders; however, this study does not make the generalization that all Title I middle school principals are transformation leaders because of the uniqueness of South Carolina public school system.

The selection of the principals was limited to those with at least three years of experience at the same school to ensure continuity in leadership. There is a high turnover rate of principals at Title I middle schools. Principal turnover adversely impacts schools. Although gains in student achievement temporarily slow whenever there is a new principal, the impact is felt more at the most challenging schools. In these schools, the new principal is more likely to have less experience and be less effective than a new principal at a less challenging school, often resulting in a longer, more pronounced slowdown of achievement gains. The reason for the staffing difference is that many principals gain their initial experience at challenging schools, then transfer to easier-to-manage schools as those positions open up. A study of one large urban district found that

principals' second or third schools typically enrolled 89% fewer poor and minority students than their first position (Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2011; Miller, 2009). The three or more year's criterion was used to ensure consistency of leadership. Principals are generally thought to be more effective as they gain years of experience.

Academic achievement cannot happen without effective leadership. Effective principals retain and recruit effective teachers. Teacher turnover rates typically increase, regardless of whether teachers leave voluntarily or involuntarily, when there is a change in principals, regardless of whether the principals are effective or ineffective (Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2011). However, less effective teachers tend to leave under an effective principal, while more effective teachers tend to leave when the school is taken over by an ineffective principal. Furthermore, effective principals are more likely to replace teachers who leave with more effective teachers (Beteille, Kalogrides & Loeb 2011, Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012; Portin, et al. 2003).

Principals become more effective as they gain more experience. Just as teachers become more effective with experience, so do principals, especially in their first three years (Clark, Martorell & Rockoff, 2009). Furthermore, no matter how effective a principal was at his or her previous school, when he or she transfers to a new school it takes approximately five years to fully stabilize and improve the teaching staff as well as fully implement policies and practices to positively impact the school's performance (Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). Effective principals still make significant improvements in their first few years; however, their effectiveness definitely increases over time. Unfortunately, schools that serve the most challenging students are more likely to be led by less experienced principals than more advantaged schools (Loeb, Kalogrides & Horng,

2010). Although both effective and ineffective principals typically transfer to less challenging schools within a district, effective principals are more likely to stay at challenging schools longer than their ineffective colleagues (Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012).

This study examined self-perceived leadership styles and association between leadership styles and student achievement. Although self-assessment is valuable in self-reflection, self-perception encourages reflections of performance, responsibility for actions, development of judgment skills, self-directed learners, more awareness of weakness and strengths. The disadvantages of self-assessment is that it can be subjective because participants may not be sincere and may even over-evaluate their own performance

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to determine the self-perceived leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals and possible association to students' academic achievement as measured by the Palmetto Assessments of State Standards or PASS. Three research questions guided the study: 1) Is there a preferred leadership style of principals in Title I middle schools in South Carolina? 2) Is there a relationship between the preferred leadership styles of principals in Title I middle school in South Carolina and student achievement? 3) Is there a relationship between leadership styles and select demographic factors, sex, race, and experience?

The findings of this study suggest that the leadership style of South Carolina, Title I, middle school principals is transformational and that there is no association to self-perceived leadership style and student achievement.

As a principal, it is important to know what your leadership style is to better address changes within each school. With these findings, there are implications for education that could be helpful for districts as well as pre-service and current administrators.

### **Implications for Researchers and Practitioners**

Although there is no association of principal's leadership style and student achievement, principals can gain insight regarding their own leadership styles and ultimately their ability to improve their school. It is evident that the principal plays a critical role within a school. This study is intended to assist districts and schools in determining specific skills needed for administrators in relation to student achievement. Below is a list of recommendations for further studies based on these findings:

1. Replication of this study is recommended with a larger sample population. The larger the sample, the more likely it will represent the general population. The results may differ with a larger diverse sample.
2. Additional studies may examine the role of gender, race, and years of experience on self-perceived leadership style. These variables shape our view of the world, and therefore, our view of the educational organization. Years of experience may condition principals to facilitate. The limitations of this study make replication necessary in order to make generalizations. Additional studies need to examine the role of gender, race, years of experience in the current administrative position, and school demographic characteristics and possible other variables that may affect the relationship of leadership styles. Results may be different in other states or geographical locations.



3. Replication of study in other different geographical locations. South Carolina has historical and current factors that have distinctively shaped the public educational system. Replicating this study in other geographical locations may produce different results.
4. Change/modify/delete the selection of the principals based on number of years of experience at same the school. This criterion was used to ensure continuity in leadership.

Although this study concluded there was no association between leadership styles and student achievement, it does not rule out other possibilities as to self-perceived leadership styles and association to student achievement

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## **Appendix A**

### **Request for Research Email**

Good day,

I am currently working on my dissertation which focuses on the preferred leadership style(s) of South Carolina Title I middle school principals. My research consists of a survey created by Burns and copyrighted by Mind Garden Inc. The survey focus is transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles of leadership. Is there a preferred style of leadership amongst South Carolina Title I middle school principals? Is there a possible association to student achievement as measured by the PASS reading and math tests? It is my hypothesis that principals that share similar leadership styles will have similar PASS scores. This information would benefit districts in creating leadership professional development opportunities for current and aspiring administrators.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to provide information of three specific leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez faire, and determine if these preferred leadership styles affect student achievement as measured by the PASS reading and math tests.

#### **Participants and Procedures**

A survey from Mind Garden, Inc. and demographic questions will be administered to Title I middle school principals in South Carolina. The surveys are on line; therefore, I request the email addresses of principals meeting the criterion from each school district. The principals will receive an initial email that includes directions on completing the survey. The survey window will be opened for two weeks. After that period, each principal will be emailed their results.

#### **District Benefits**

These assessments may provide districts with information about current leaders' leadership styles. With this information more defined professional development opportunities could be developed to meet the needs of administrators. If a certain leadership style has an association with PASS scores, a more defined professional development opportunity could be developed to meet the needs of administrators. This information could also give administrators the opportunity to self-reflect when making organizational decisions.

### Confidentiality and Privacy

This research is being conducted as a dissertation study by a Ph.D. candidate at the University of South Carolina. The survey, MLQ 5X, was designed to collect information on specific leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The survey was designed to collect quantitative information.

Principals responses will only be used in a collective format to assist in providing information on preferred leadership styles and if there is any association with student achievement. Individual pieces of information will not be used with specific names of school. Please note that the personal information that is provided will only be used as contact information from the researcher. Since the surveys contain only indicators for each leadership style, there are no possible physical, psychological, legal, or other risks for the participants to participate in this study.

### Data Development

Each principal's leadership style will be entered using EXCEL and SASS, Statistical Analysis System, software with their PASS scores for the 2013-14 school year. The collective data for each district will be reviewed for the researcher's dissertation.

### Significance of the Study

The changing educational landscape has encouraged principals to evaluate their current leadership style. They are confronted with the reality that the way they led in the past may not be the way they need to lead in the future. A review of literature reveals that there are numerous studies investigating the relationship between principal leadership styles and student achievement (Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves & Chapman, 2003). There are few studies specifically investigating the preferred leadership styles of Title I middle school principal. A principal leadership styles has influence, direct or indirect, on student achievement (Kythreotis, Pashiardis, & Kyrakides, 2010). This study is significant because it may fill a gap in previous research concerning preferred leadership styles of principals. This study may also bring about change by providing research concerning the importance of leadership style during a time of transition, and facilitating change to support student achievement. The aim of this study is to provide a discussion in the field of education.

### Enclosures

- ☐ Approval Exempt Letter from the University of South Carolina
- ☐ Email from Dissertation Chair/Advisor
- ☐ Email to principals containing contact information and a general overview of the survey
- ☐ Confidentiality and privacy
- ☐ Copies of sample MLQ survey

## Appendix B

### IRB Approval Letter



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

April 28, 2014

Ms. Valarie Greene  
College of Education  
Education Leadership & Policies  
Wardlaw  
Columbia, SC 29208

Re: **Pro00033909**

Study Title: *Preferred Leadership Style of South Carolina Title I Middle School Principals: Is There a Relationship Between Leadership Style and Student Achievement?*

FYI: University of South Carolina Assurance number: FWA 00000404 / IRB Registration number: 00000240

Dear Ms. Greene:

In accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), the referenced study received an exemption from Human Research Subject Regulations on **4/24/2014**. No further action or Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight is required, as long as the project remains the same. However, you must inform this office of any changes in procedures involving human subjects. Changes to the current research protocol could result in a reclassification of the study and further review by the IRB.

Because this project was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, consent document(s), if applicable, are not stamped with an expiration date.

Research related records should be retained for a minimum of three years after termination of the study.

The Office of Research Compliance is an administrative office that supports the USC Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, please contact Arlene McWhorter at [arlenem@sc.edu](mailto:arlenem@sc.edu) or (803) 777-7095.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Johnson".

Lisa M. Johnson  
IRB Manager

## **Appendix C**

### **General Overview of the Survey**

#### **The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) 15 minutes**

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X short) contains 45 items answered by using a 5-point Likert scale. The MLQ 5X was designed to measure the leadership styles of leaders. The MLQ-5X measures nine leadership qualities that comprise three leadership styles. The questionnaire measures a broad range of leadership types from passive leaders, to leaders who give contingent rewards to followers, to leaders who transform their followers into becoming leaders themselves. The MLQ identifies the characteristics of a transformational leader and helps individuals discover how they perceive their leadership style and how others perceive their style of leadership.

## Appendix D

### Approval Letter Charleston County School District



November 14, 2014

Valarie Greene  
College of Education  
Education Leadership & Policies  
Wardlaw  
Columbia, SC 29208

#### Administration

Michael L. Bobby  
Acting Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Charles J. D'Alfonso  
Executive Director of Leadership  
Effectiveness, Achievement and  
Accountability

Dear Ms. Greene,

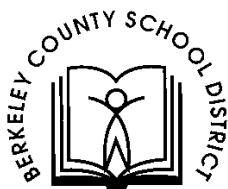
This is to inform you that your request for your research "Preferred Leadership Style of SC Title I Middle School Principals: Is There a Relationship between Leadership Style and Student Achievement?" has been reviewed and approved.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Except in the case of emancipated minors, researchers must obtain signatures of parents or legally authorized representatives on a consent form prior to a student's participation in the research study. All consent forms must contain the following sentences:
  - "I do not wish (my child) to participate." (This must be an option on the form.)
  - The school district is neither sponsoring nor conducting this research.
  - There is no penalty for not participating.
  - Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- Assent of children who are of sufficient age and maturity should be obtained prior to their participation in research. In all cases, students should be told that they have the right to decline participation.
- Parents or guardians of students participating in your research must be notified of their right to inspect all instructional materials, surveys, and non-secured assessment tools used in conjunction with your research. This notification should include details of how parents can access these materials.
- Student social security numbers should never be used.
- Data directly identifying participants (students, teachers, administrators), such as name, address, telephone number, etc., may not be distributed in any form to outside persons or agencies.
- All personally identifiable information, such as name, social security number, student ID number, address, telephone number, email address must be suppressed in surveys and reports. Reports and publications intended for audiences outside of the district should not identify names of individual schools or the district.
- Any further analyses and use of the collected data beyond the scope of the approved research project, and any extensions and variations of the research project, must be requested through CCSD's Department of Achievement and Accountability.

## Appendix E

### Approval Letter Berkeley County School District



To: Valarie Greene  
From: Kevin L. O’Gorman, Ph.D.  
Date: April 28, 2016  
Re: Dissertation Approval

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Please consider this communication as official permission for conducting your dissertation study on “The Preferred Leadership Style of South Carolina Title I Middle School Principals: Is There a Relationship Between Leadership Style and Student Achievement?” in the Berkeley County School District.

Please keep in mind this will be on a volunteer basis and the school Principal does not have to participate.

I look forward to receiving and reviewing your findings.

If I may be of further assistance in your research, please let me know.

Thank you



## **Appendix F**

### **Demographic Questionnaire**

Please answer the following questions:

**Sex**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

**Ethnicity:**

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian/Alaskan
- ☐ Other (please enter below)

**What are the number of years of experience as a school principal in this school?**

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11 or more years