

THE EFFECTS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON
ACADEMIC OPTIMISM WITHIN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between transformational leadership and academic optimism. Elementary schools in northern Alabama were the focus of this study. Sixty-seven schools participated in this study. Faculty members of the participating schools completed two survey instruments: Leithwood's school leadership survey and the school academic optimism survey (SAOS). There were 470 respondents to the instruments. All data were aggregated to the school level.

The independent variable for this study was Leithwood's model of transformational leadership. Conceptually, Leithwood defines transformational leadership as a form of principal leadership that moves individuals toward a level of commitment to achieve school goals by setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program.

The dependent variable of this study was academic optimism. Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy defined academic optimism as the general and collective confidence of a school's faculty that conditions exist for students to achieve academic success. Academic optimism is comprised of three organizational characteristics: teacher collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and faculty trust in clients.

Prior research has found that principal activities focusing on the learning environment, emphasizing academic achievement, and establishing high performance goals can influence student achievement. Furthermore, previous studies support the positive relationship between transformational leadership and student engagement, classroom instruction, teacher commitment,

organizational learning, school culture, job satisfaction, changed teacher practices, and particularly collective efficacy. This study theorized that transformational leadership and academic optimism would be positively correlated.

Results of correlation testing indicated that Leithwood's model of transformational leadership is positively related to the academic optimism of the school. The results of linear regression testing showed that each individual category of Leithwood's model of transformational leadership was also positively related to academic optimism. These results provided support for the hypotheses of this study; the greater the degree of transformational leadership the greater the degree of academic optimism in a school.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	ix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement	3
Rationale for the Study	3
Background of the Study	5
Transformational Leadership	5
Academic Optimism	7
Definition of Concepts	9
Research Questions	11
Research Hypotheses	11
Limitations	12
Summary	12
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	14
Conceptual Framework	14
Development of Transformational Leadership	14
Leithwood's Model of Transformational Leadership	16
Criticism of Transformational Leadership	30

Development of Academic Optimism	32
Theoretical Framework.....	41
Transformational Leadership and Academic Optimism	42
Academic Optimism and Student Performance	43
Rationale and Hypotheses.....	44
3 METHODOLOGY	47
Sample.....	47
Research Instruments	48
Leithwood’s Leadership Instrument	48
School Academic Optimism Survey (SAOS).....	49
Data Analysis	51
4 RESULTS	52
Descriptive Statistics.....	52
Reliability and Factor Analysis Testing.....	53
Correlations.....	58
Test of Hypotheses.....	60
Un-hypothesized Findings	61
5 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	63
Discussion of Research Findings.....	63
Transformational Leadership was Positively Related to Academic Optimism ($r = .48, p < .01$).....	64
Setting Direction was Positively Related to Academic Optimism ($r = .45, p < .01$).....	64
Developing People was Positively Correlated to Academic Optimism ($r = .40, p < .01$).....	64

Redesigning the Organization was Positively Related to Academic Optimism ($r = .49, p < .01$).....	64
Managing the Instructional Program was Positively Correlated to Academic Optimism ($r = .49, p < .01$).....	65
A Factor Analysis Confirmed that Setting Direction, Developing People, Redesigning the Organization, and Managing the Instructional Program Comprise a Single Construct, Transformational Leadership.....	65
Findings not Hypothesized	65
Theoretical and Practical Implications.....	66
The Relationship between Transformational Leadership Practices and Academic Optimism.....	67
Transformational Leadership--Confirming a Construct	75
Findings not Hypothesized	76
Recommendations for Further Study	77
Conclusion and Final Summary.....	78
REFERENCES	80

LIST OF TABLES

1	School-level Research-based Leadership Practices Related with Vision Building.....	18
2	School Principals' Practices Targeted Toward Goal Setting.....	19
3	Practices that Create High Performance Expectations.....	20
4	Practices that Provide Individual Support.....	22
5	Practices that Foster Intellectual Stimulation	23
6	Four Types of Leader Modeling	24
7	Practices that Build School Culture	26
8	Practices that Build a Collaborative School Culture.....	26
9	Practices that Foster Shared Decision-making Practices	27
10	Descriptive Statistic	53
11	Leadership Survey Alpha Reliability Results	54
12	Academic Optimism Survey Alpha Reliability Results.....	55
13	Factor Analysis of Transformational Leadership Instrument.....	55
14	Factor Analysis of Categories of Transformational Leadership.....	57
15	Pearson Correlation Coefficients of All Variables	58
16	Correlation and Regression Statistics of Academic Optimism and Categories of Transformational Leadership ($N = 67$)	60
17	Correlation and Regression Statistics of Academic Optimism and Categories of Transformational Leadership and SES ($N = 67$).....	62

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the past 50 years, education in the United States has been driven by government mandates to improve student achievement. These have come in the form of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, A Nation at Risk (1983), and most recently the reauthorization of ESEA through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002. Each of these legislative acts has forced educators to focus on learning strategies and practices that will increase student performance. NCLB has stated goals that 100% of our nation's children will be grade-level proficient in math and language arts by the year 2014.

The accountability demands of legislative acts increase the need for educational research, which will increase student performance beyond the socioeconomic constraints of students, families, and communities. School leaders must stay abreast of the latest educational research and be prepared to initiate change within his or her school. Effective change within schools is determined by the actions of the school principal (Edmonds, 1979). Leaders within a school must be agents of change, continually seeking to improve school performance through effective reform. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) assert that transformational leadership practices are conducive to positive results in school reform efforts.

Transformational leaders foster higher levels of motivation and commitment to the organization by developing organizational vision, commitment and trust among employees, and facilitating organizational learning (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Bass (1985), Yukl (1989), and

Leithwood et al. (1999) have all concurred that traditional models of school leadership (instructional or managerial) are not as useful for school leaders as transformational approaches.

Leithwood and Jantzi's (2005) review of transformational leadership research found five of nine quantitative research studies that reported significant relationships between transformational leadership and some measure of achievement. They determined that these results do not allow for a clear conclusion to be drawn. However, this model of leadership has been shown to have positive relationships to improvement in such areas as student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), classroom instruction (Marks & Printy, 2003), teacher's level of effort and commitment (Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003), and organizational learning in schools (Silins, Mulford, Zarins, & Bishop, 2000). Furthermore, Leithwood and Jantzi's (2005) review of transformational leadership research determined several mediating variables (school culture, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, changed teacher practices, planning strategies for change, pedagogical or instructional quality, organizational learning, and collective teacher efficacy) in which this form of leadership had a positive effect.

Particular organization variables such as, collective teacher efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis, are organizational characteristics that have been shown to each have direct influence in increasing student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2000; Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). Hoy and his colleagues (2006) have linked these three characteristics of schools into a single latent construct which has been justly named academic optimism. Therefore, student achievement gains can be made in schools where leaders exhibit transformational practices that enhance the academic optimism of the school.

Problem Statement

School leaders are continually being charged with increasing student achievement. One way to increase student achievement could be the relationship between school leadership and organizational characteristics that have been proven to increase achievement. This research project examines whether or not there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership behaviors as defined by Leithwood (1999) and academic optimism. The determination of a positive link between these two constructs will provide insight into leadership behaviors that can lead to an increase in student achievement. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) support continued leadership research on mediators which have been shown to produce positive effects on students.

This study also seeks to examine if the factors measuring transformational leadership as defined by Leithwood (1999) are stable. Determining the stability of the factors measuring transformational leadership will provide support to Leithwood's research. Therefore, transformational leadership and academic optimism are the primary variables studied in this research.

Rationale for the Study

Transformational leadership was described by Bennis (1959) as a leader's capacity to raise another person's consciousness, build meanings, and inspire human intent. Burns (1978) furthered this conceptualization by stating that transformational leadership is the foregoing of self-interest by the leader and the follower to cause a particular goal or outcome that will benefit all involved. Research has shown that transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers in ways that increase employee performance more than leaders who are not transformational (Avolio, Waldman, & Einstein, 1988; Howell & Avolio, 1993). In 2004, Griffin linked effective

leadership with transformational leadership. Griffin asserted that principals who display transformational leadership skills have school faculty with higher job satisfaction, which showed a moderate positive relationship to progress in student achievement.

This research does not seek to prove that transformational leadership is better than other forms (instructional, distributive, etc.), but rather to build on prior research that has shown that the contributions of this form of leadership has produced significant results in other organizational characteristics (collective efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, etc.). Hallinger and Heck (1998) asserted that positive outcomes (student achievement) of this form of leadership are mediated by other factors such as teacher commitment, instructional practice, or school culture (Leithwood, 1994).

Schools are being mandated to improve academic performance. School leaders must initiate organizational changes that will impact the learning environment. This study establishes a connection between transformational leadership practices and academic optimism, which has been linked to increasing student performance even when controlling for socioeconomic status (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk, 2000; Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991).

Transformational leadership has been shown to predict significantly a positive school culture consisting of norms, beliefs, and values (Deal & Peterson, 1999). In Leithwood's (1999) conceptualization of transformational leadership, he insists that this style of leadership is conducive to creating a productive school culture and a structure of shared decision-making. These are necessary conditions for a school strong in academic optimism. The factors of academic optimism (collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and faculty trust) will be fostered by a principal leadership focused on transformational behaviors.

Background of the Study

Transformational Leadership

In 1985, Bass contrasted Burns' 1978 view of transformational leadership by declaring that the best leaders exemplify characteristics of both transformational and transactional leadership. His model represented a transformational to transactional continuum of leadership. Bass (1985) conceptualized transformational leadership into four components that represented transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation, known as the four "I's." These are the leader behaviors that create enthusiasm for subordinates to have an enhanced effort in pursuing organizational goals in spite of adverse conditions and hindrances. His model also included three transactional dimensions, contingent reward, management by exception, and laissez-faire.

It is significant to note that these initial constructs of transformational leadership played an influential role in guiding Leithwood's development of his transformational leadership model, but his model of school leadership was derived from his own qualitative and quantitative research (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Leithwood and his colleagues have provided extensive research on the effects of transformational leadership when applied to schools (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, 2000; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Fernandez, 1994; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood, Menzies, & Jantzi, 1999). Leithwood's model of transformational leadership with regard to school leaders offers a different perspective from the "classical" views of Burns and Bass. An example of this would be Leithwood's attention to building productive community relationships, which is not addressed in earlier models.

The Leithwood model initially conceptualized transformational leadership into eight dimensions: creating vision, developing group goals, maintaining high performance expectations, modeling, providing individual support, providing intellectual stimulation, building a productive school culture, and building structures for collaborations (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Fernandez, 1994). Recent research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) has suggested the addition of a ninth dimension: building good relations with parents. Leithwood's model also includes management dimensions that address the transactional component of transformational leadership. These are as follows: establishing effective staffing practices, providing instructional support, monitoring school activities, and buffering staff from excessive and distracting external demands.

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, and Harris (2006) have further grouped these dimensions into four categories: setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999, Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). They describe these categories as the "core practices" or the "basics" of successful school leadership. According to Leithwood and his colleagues (2006), these categories encompass specific leader behaviors that are common among successful school leaders.

Setting direction focuses on the activities of the leader that build a clear school vision, establish school goals, and create high performance expectations. These are the dimensions of a school leader that will establish him or her as transformational.

Developing people is comprised of providing individualized support, intellectual stimulation, and modeling. These leader activities seek to establish a culture within the school that builds the individual capacity of the teacher while maintaining focus on common goals.

These activities provide the necessary motivation to teachers by providing examples of best practice, encouragement, personal attention, and recognition for a job well done.

Redesigning the organization is the category designated to produce change. The dimensions of this group are establishing a productive school culture, fostering participative decision making, and building good relations with parents. The activities of this group give teachers a sense of ownership within the organization. Teachers begin to feel empowered through participative decision making, which leads to a belief in their abilities to make a difference in the classroom and the school as a whole (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Managing the instructional program is a grouping of managerial leadership practices. These are the behaviors that will create a strong and stable organizational structure. Activities associated with this category are staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, and buffering staff from distractions to their work. These are the leader practices that will provide coordinated support for programs initiated for school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Academic Optimism

Academic optimism is a collection of school characteristics that have all been previously linked to academic achievement. These characteristics are teacher collective efficacy, teacher trust in clients, and academic emphasis. Conceptually, Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy (2006) have defined academic optimism as the general and collective confidence of a school's faculty that conditions exist for students to achieve academic success.

Collective efficacy is a group belief that the ability exists to affect change within an organization. Collective efficacy is a group assignment to the concept of self-efficacy that was

fostered by Bandura (1989). The research of Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998a) established self-efficacy as an important factor within schools. Furthermore, they concluded that many problems faced by teachers “require that they work together as a collective force to change the lives of their students” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998a, p. 241). Pajares (1994, 1997), Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998a), and Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) established a strong link between the efficacy beliefs of a school (self and collective) with academic achievement. Hoy and Miskel (1996) asserted that the shared beliefs of members (teachers) of an organization (school) influence the social setting of the school.

Faculty trust in students and parents is a collective school property, which is the willingness on the part of teachers to be vulnerable to the clients (students and parents) of a school because the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Bryk and Schneider (2002) suggested that trust was an essential factor for school improvement.

There are five facets of trust: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2000). Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2001) determined that trust creates a better learning environment for students by facilitating and empowering positive connections between families and schools. Faculty trust has been positively linked to student achievement (Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Academic emphasis is an organizational construct that defines the “extent to which a school is driven by academic excellence” (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002, p. 79). Academic emphasis is a multi-faceted construct in which a school has set high achievable goals, there is a serious and orderly learning environment, and there is high student motivation for academic

success (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). In 1989, Lee and Bryk found that a school's academic focus was linked to student achievement regardless of socioeconomic status or minority status. Hoy and his colleagues (1990) provided further support that the academic emphasis of a school was a major factor in academic achievement beyond the effects of socioeconomic status.

Hoy and his colleagues initially described academic emphasis as a component of a healthy school climate (Hoy et al., 1991, Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy & Tarter, 1997). Hoy and Hannum (1997) described the climate of a school as “the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members” (p. 291). Academic emphasis is a vital component in school climate. This trait of school climate is essential to the belief of the school's students and faculty that academics are important (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). Schools that exhibit the essential characteristics of academic emphasis are uniquely intertwined with a healthy school climate. The school climate is a characteristic of the entire school based on the perceptions of its members that arise from behaviors that are not only important to the members, but also influence member behaviors (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000).

Definition of Concepts

Key terms in this study are defined below.

Academic emphasis: a school's general and collective perspective on the importance of academics (Goddard et al., 2000; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002). Academic Emphasis is operationally defined using a subtest of the Organizational Health Index (OHI).

Academic optimism: the general and collective confidence of a school's faculty that conditions exist for students to achieve academic success (Hoy, et. al., 2006). Academic optimism is defined using the School Academic Optimism Survey (SAOS).

Collective efficacy: a group level trait representing the collective judgments of organizational group members regarding the extent that the group as a whole can cause a particular outcome (Bandura, 1997). Operationally, collective efficacy is defined using the Collective Efficacy Scale.

Principal leadership: building level administrator who works with others to provide direction and who exert influence on persons and things in order to achieve the desired goals of the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Teacher collective efficacy: the shared beliefs of the capability of teachers and principals that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

Transformational leadership: a leader's capacity to raise another's consciousness, build meanings, and inspire human intent (Bennis, 1959). Burns (1978) declared that transformational leadership was the foregoing of self-interest by the leader and the led to cause a particular goal or outcome that will benefit all. A form of principal leadership that moves individuals toward a level of commitment to achieve school goals by setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Transformational leadership is operationally defined using Leithwood's Successful Leadership questionnaire.

Trust: a person's willingness to be vulnerable to another based upon the confidence that the other party is benevolent, reliable, competent, open, and honest (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Operationally, trust is defined using the Omnibus Trust Scale.

Research Questions

The data gathered for the purpose of this study were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does transformational leadership activities of the principal influence the academic optimism of a school?
2. Are the dimensions measuring transformational leadership, setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program, each influential in increasing the academic optimism of the school?
3. Are the factors measuring transformational leadership stable?

Research Hypotheses

The preceding research questions give rise to the following set of hypotheses that guided the empirical phase of this research:

H1: The more transformational leadership style of the principal of a school, the more academic optimism within the school.

H2: Each category of transformational leadership, setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program, will be positively related to the academic optimism within the school.

H3: Transformational leadership is a function of four categories of behavior.

Limitations

Data for this study was collected through surveys administered to elementary school teachers in Alabama. Care was taken to obtain authentic teacher opinions with respect to the topics discussed in this study. The survey instruments used have been shown in previous studies to be valid and reliable measures of the constructs tested. This study assumes that teachers gave honest responses to survey questions.

This study was limited to elementary schools in Alabama that contained at least the fourth grade for the purposes of obtaining common student achievement data. The schools in the sample were drawn from a group of school districts that consented to participate in this study. The sample for this study was not random and caution should be used when generalizing the results.

Summary

For the purpose of this query, Leithwood's (1999) conceptual definition of transformational leadership was used. This model establishes transformational leadership along nine dimensions: building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, developing structures to foster participation in school decisions, and fostering productive school and parent relationships. These nine dimensions have been placed into three categories, which comprise transformational leadership. The categories are setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The management (transactional) dimensions of leadership are staffing, providing instructional support, monitoring school

activities, and buffering teachers from distractions to their job. These comprise the category of managing the instructional program. It is through these four categories this study examined transformational leadership.

This study proposed that there is a direct connection among the constructs of transformational leadership and academic optimism. I declare that the components necessary for academic optimism are directly related to Leithwood's conceptualization that transformational leadership will provide intellectual stimulation, establish high expectations, build school vision, offer individualized support, and model best practices and important school values while providing the necessary structure to establish a culture that will foster productive teacher/teacher, teacher/student, teacher/parent, and teacher/principal relationships (Leithwood et al., 1999).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual and historical review of the literature related to the variables involved in this study, transformational leadership and academic optimism. This chapter will provide the conceptual development of transformational leadership and academic optimism. In conclusion, a theory and testable hypotheses explaining the relationship of the two variables will be proposed.

Conceptual Framework

Development of Transformational Leadership

As with many other forms of leadership, transformational leadership has been interpreted and conceptualized in many ways. Bennis (1959) introduced us to the view that transformative leadership was a person's capacity to raise another person's consciousness, build meanings, and inspire human intent. Burns (1978) declared that transformational leadership was the foregoing of self-interest by the leader and the follower to cause a particular goal or outcome that will benefit all. Bass (1985) chose to modify Burns' definition into a two-factor theory that poses transformational and transactional leadership as the two ends of a leadership continuum. This meant that leaders could be both transformational and transactional and the two could complement each other. It was from this conceptualization that Leithwood (1994) initially identified eight factors that comprised his model of transformational leadership.

Whether it is Bennis, Burns, Bass, or Leithwood, transformational leadership is a leadership strategy that is founded on the relationship of the leader and those being led. Bass (1985) characterized this relationship into four qualities: idealized influence, inspiration, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These have more recently been referred to as the four I's (Bass & Avolio, 1993, 1994). The opposing end of the relational leadership continuum would have transactional leadership with the three dimensions of contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire or "hands off" leadership.

Bass's (1985) two-factor theory allows for transformational and transactional leadership practices to work together. Bass argues that the best leaders are both transformational and transactional. These leadership practices actually build on one another and work together to ensure that organizational needs are continually being met (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transactional practices foster the continuation of the daily routines, while transformational leadership is necessary for organizational change (Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996).

Transformational leaders have often been deemed to be very charismatic and have the ability to inspire their followers. Bass (1985) asserted that transformational leaders use inspiration to communicate organizational vision and establish a strong school culture. In communicating their vision, leaders allow followers to become informed about the significance of their efforts in accomplishing organizational goals (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992).

Transformational leaders have the ability to develop a personal rapport with their followers by providing individual consideration by serving as a mentor or coach (Bass & Avolio, 1993). The establishment of relationships built on inspiration and personal attention foster an atmosphere of intellectual stimulation. The leader is able to encourage followers to think creatively and recommend ideas (Bass, 1985). The leader's willingness to challenge assumptions

and take risks builds the foundation for employee motivation, commitment, and extra-effort, which are necessary to initiate change within the organization (Yukl, 1989).

Leithwood's Model of Transformational Leadership

Leithwood presents the most fully developed conceptualization of transformational leadership in relation to schools. Therefore, there are dimensions associated with other conceptualizations of transformational leadership that are either absent (charisma) or are given quite different significance (transactional practices) when compared to Leithwood's model (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Furthermore, being designed for schools from his own qualitative and quantitative research, Leithwood's model includes dimensions of practice (creating productive community relationships) not found in prior models of transformational leadership.

It is because of these distinctions and significance for school research that Leithwood's model of transformational leadership was chosen for this study. The nine dimensions (building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions) of Leithwood's model establish a framework of the transformational leadership continuum that can be associated with specific transformational leadership practices and problem-solving processes in a school setting (Leithwood, 1994). Leithwood addresses the transactional (management) component of transformational leadership with four additional dimensions: establishing effective staffing practices, providing instructional support, monitoring school activities, and buffering staff from excessive and distracting external demands.

Leithwood and his colleagues (2006) have more recently organized these dimensions into four categories; setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. It is through these categories that each dimension will be discussed.

Setting direction. Through a series of seven quantitative studies relating to the nature and effects of transformational school leadership, Leithwood (1994) found that a leader's practice of direction setting explained 50% of the effects of this type of leadership. Leithwood further described direction setting as a function of three dimensions of leadership practice. These were building a shared vision, developing a consensus about goals, and creating high performance expectations.

Building a shared vision without fail involves implementing and incorporating a system-wide vision with local school conditions. Nanus (1992) described vision as a "realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization" (p. 8). Leithwood et al. (1996) identified eight school level research-based leadership practices related with vision building, which are listed in Table 1.

Vision building is a deliberate process to create a foundation built on an ambitious sense of purpose, which a school will strive to achieve over many years. Achieving this vision is accomplished by the establishment of school goals that are consistent with the needs of the school. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) asserted that these dimensions often go hand in hand only differing in timeframe and scope.

Table 1

School-level Research-based Leadership Practices Related with Vision Building

Vision Building Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping to provide colleagues with an overall sense of purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiating processes (retreats and so on) that engage staff in the collective development of a shared vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • espousing a vision for the school but not in a way that pre-empts others from expressing their vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exciting colleagues with visions of what they may be able to accomplish if they work together
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping clarify the meaning of the schools vision in terms of its practical implications for programs and instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting staff in understanding the relationship between external initiatives for change and the school’s vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting staff in understanding the larger social mission of which their vision of the school is a part, a social mission that may include such important end values as equality, justice, and integrity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using all available opportunities to communicate the school’s vision to staff, students, parents, and other members of the school community

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) declared that transformational approaches to developing goals were behaviors that fostered cooperation among employees in working toward and accomplishing a common goal. Goal setting activities are those which clarify vision and motivate employees to see the school vision and goals as not only challenging, but reachable. A review of the literature on transformational leadership (Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996) identified school principal practices targeted toward goal setting. These 10 practices are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

School Principals' Practices Targeted Toward Goal Setting

Goal Setting Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing staff with a process through which to establish goals and to regularly review those goals, this is likely to be a problem solving process and to include careful diagnosis of the school's context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expecting teams of teachers (for example, departments) and individuals to regularly engage in goal setting and reviewing progress toward those goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisting staff in developing consistency between school visions and both group and individual goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working towards the development of consensus about school and group goals and the priority to be awarded such goals; frequently referring to school goals and making explicit use of them when decisions are being made about changes in the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequently referring to school goals and making explicit use of them when decisions are being made about changes in the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging teachers, as a part of goal setting, to establish and review individual professional growth goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having ongoing discussions with individual teachers about their professional growth goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly acknowledging the compatibility of teachers' and schools' goals when such is the case
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressing one's own views about school goals and priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acting as an important resource in helping colleagues achieve their individual and school goals

The third dimension of this category, creating high expectations, is an essential component to setting the direction of a school because the focus is on processes and outcomes. Transformational leaders who desire to encourage high performance expectations will utilize practices which demonstrate the leader's own expectations for "excellence, quality, and/or high performance on the part of the followers" (Podsakoff et al., 1990, p. 112). The communication of these expectations will enhance the teacher's perception of the gap that exists between what the school is currently accomplishing and what it aspires to achieve.

In the Leithwood, et al. (1996) review of transformational leadership, six practices which create high performance expectations were identified. These practices are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Practices that Create High Performance Expectations

Practices that Create High Performance Expectations
• expecting staff to be innovative, hard working and professional (these qualities are included among the criteria used in hiring staff)
• demonstrating an unflagging commitment to the welfare of students
• often espousing norms of excellence and quality of service
• not accepting second-rate performance from anyone
• establishing flexible boundaries for what people do, thus permitting freedom of judgment and action within the context of overall school goals and plans
• being clear about one's own views about what is right and good

Leithwood and colleagues (1999) concluded that setting direction is an essential task for leaders. They further asserted that transformational leaders seek to accomplish these tasks in ways which clarify the direction of the school and give each teacher the motivation to progress toward the vision, goals, and expectations that have been placed in front of them.

Developing people. The second category of transformational leadership, developing people, is primarily focused on the individual (teacher). This category focuses on leader practices that “contribute directly or indirectly to the development of the teachers’ dispositions, motivations, bodies of knowledge, and skills” (Leithwood, 1990, p. 71), which are required to establish and pursue the shared directions of the school. The dimensions of this category are individual support, intellectual stimulation, and modeling important values and practices. Leithwood (1990) claimed that this focus on the individual is important to the organization

because “people are the organization” (p. 71). This is meant to imply that everything we assert or learn from an organization comes from what is interpreted from the people of the organization.

Podsakoff et al. (1990) found that individual support was a transformational leader behavior that demonstrated that the leader respected followers and had a concern for their needs and personal feelings. Leithwood et al. (1996) identified several distinct facets of individual support that were supported by 20 specific leadership practices. Each facet of individual support with the supporting practices is listed in Table 4.

It is important to note here that in Leithwood’s model of transformational leadership he includes contingent reward as a part of individualized support. Avolio and Bass (1988) define contingent reward as occurring when followers are continually being told what their reward will be for their efforts. This type of leadership is actually viewed as transactional, but providing frequent feedback about performance can be beneficial to a teacher’s self-efficacy and/or job satisfaction, which could be considered transforming (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999).

Creating intellectual stimulation, the second dimension of developing people, is accomplished through transformational leadership practices that challenge followers to review their work (practices) and find new ways to perform (Podsakoff et al., 1990). This behavior was described by Senge (1990) as a leadership approach that allows teachers to become comfortable enough to be challenged to become uncomfortable. Leithwood et al. (1996) found evidence of basic strategies for fostering intellectual stimulation. These strategies and their practices are listed in Table 5.

Table 4

Practices that Provide Individual Support

Equitable, humane, and considerate treatment of one's colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• treating everyone equally – no favoritism toward groups or individuals• having an open door policy• being approachable, accessible, and welcoming• protecting teachers from excessive intrusions on their classroom work• giving personal attention to colleagues who seem neglected by others• being thoughtful about the personal needs of the staff
Support for the personal, professional development of staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• encouraging individual staff members to try new practices consistent with their interests• as often as possible, respond positively to staff members' initiatives for change• as often as possible, provide money for professional development and other needed resources in support of changes agreed on by staff• providing coaching for those staff members who need it
Develop close knowledge of their individual colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• getting to know individual teachers well enough to understand their problems and to be aware of their particular skills and interests; listening carefully to staff's ideas• having the 'pulse' of the school and building on the individual interests of teachers, often as the starting point for change
Recognition of good work and effort
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide recognition for staff work in the form of individual praise or 'pats' on the back• are specific about what is being praised as 'good work'• offer personal encouragement to individuals for good performance• demonstrate confidence in colleagues' ability to perform at their best
Approaches to change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• follow through on decisions made jointly with teachers• explicitly share teachers' legitimate cautions about proceeding quickly toward implementing new practices, thus by demonstrating sensitivity to the real problems of implementation faced by teachers• take individual teachers' opinions into consideration when initiating actions that may affect their work• instill, in staff, a sense of belonging to the school

Table 5

Practices that Foster Intellectual Stimulation

<hr/> <p>Change school norms that might constrain the thinking of the staff</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing penalties for making mistakes as a part of efforts toward professional and school improvements • embrace and sometimes generate conflict as a way of clarifying alternative courses of action available to the school • requiring colleagues to support opinions with good reasons • insisting on careful thought before action <hr/>
<p>Challenge the status quo</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directly challenging basic assumptions of staff about their work as well unsubstantiated or questionable beliefs and practices • encouraging staff to evaluate their practices and refine them as needed • encourage colleagues to re-examine some of their basic assumptions about their work; determining the problems inherent in the the way things are • stimulating colleagues to think more deeply about what they are doing for their students <hr/>
<p>Encouraging new initiatives</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage staff to try new practices without using pressure • encourage staff to pursue their own goals for professional learning • helping staff to make personal sense of change • providing the necessary resources to support staff participation in change initiatives <hr/>
<p>Bring their colleagues into contact with new ideas</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stimulating the search for and discussion of new ideas and information relevant to school directions • seeking out new ideas by visiting other schools, attending conferences and passing on these new ideas to staff • inviting teachers to share their expertise with their colleagues • consistently seeking out and communicating productive activities taking place within the school • providing information helpful to staff in thinking of ways to implement new practices <hr/>

Modeling is the third dimension of developing people. Podsakoff et al. (1990) defined this as leader practices that give employees an example to follow, which is congruent with leader and organizational values. Leithwood and his colleagues (1999) theorized that these types of practices may actually enhance a teacher’s self-efficacy and create an enthusiasm for duties

performed daily. Leithwood's (1996) review of transformational leadership revealed three types of leader modeling. The types and the practices of each are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Four Types of Leader Modeling

The transformational leader's general commitment to the school organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becoming involved in all aspects of school activity • working alongside teachers to plan special events • displaying energy and enthusiasm for own work
Commitment to professional growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responding constructively to unrequested feedback about one's leadership practices • requesting feedback from staff about one's own work • demonstrating willingness to change one's practices in light of new understandings
Enhance the quality of both group and individual problem-solving processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrating, through school decision-making processes, the value of examining problems from multiple perspectives • modeling problem-solving techniques that others can adapt for their own work
Reinforce key values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect for others • trust in judgment of one's own colleagues • punctuality

Individualized support, intellectual stimulation, and modeling are interpersonal practices that transformational leaders exercise and engage in regularly to shape or influence followers. The intent of these practices is to develop a rapport and relationship with followers that will foster a culture open to change and growth.

Redesigning the organization. The third category of transformational leadership is redesigning the organization. In this category, focus shifts to the creation of an environment in

which educational change can occur. This category is comprised of four essential dimensions: culture, structure, policy, and community relationships.

Schein (1985) claims that building a productive school culture is the central element in a leader's practice. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) acknowledge that there is much evidence to suggest that the culture of a school plays a big role in the success of the school. The culture of a school is the shared "norms, beliefs, values, and assumptions" of the members of the school (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999:83). Transformational leadership has been shown to significantly predict a positive school culture consisting of norms, beliefs, and values (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) found that transformational leadership significantly predicted a positive school culture, effective classroom conditions, and student identification with the school.

Leithwood and his colleagues (1996) identified four studies, Helm (1989), Leithwood and Jantzi (1990), Skalbeck (1991), and Leithwood et al. (1993), which revealed culture building practices aimed at strengthening the school culture. These behaviors are listed below Table 7.

Table 7

Practices that Build School Culture

Culture Building Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• clarifying the school’s vision in relation to collaborative work and the care and respect with which students were to be treated• reinforcing, with staff, norms of excellence for their own work and the work of students• using every opportunity to focus attention on, and to publicly communicate, the school’s vision and goals• using symbols and rituals to express cultural values in the context of social occasions in which most staff participate• confronting conflict openly and acting to resolve it through the use of shared values• using slogans and motivational phrases repeatedly• using bureaucratic mechanisms to support cultural values and a collaborative form of culture (for example, hiring staff who share school vision, norms, and values)• assisting staff to clarify shared beliefs and values and to act in accordance with such beliefs and values• acting in a manner consistent with those beliefs and values shared within the school

These studies further identified specific behaviors aimed at creating a collaborative culture. These additional behaviors are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Practices that Build a Collaborative School Culture

Collaborative Culture Building Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sharing power and responsibility with others• working to eliminate ‘boundaries’ between administrators and teachers and between other groups in the school• providing opportunities and resources for collaborative staff work (for example, creating projects in which collaboration clearly is a useful method of working)

Bryk and Schneider (2002) recognized that trust is an important component in building a collaborative culture. Leithwood and his colleagues (2006, p. 33) assert that “a history of working together will sometimes build trust making further collaboration easier.” In essence, working together makes working together easier in the future. A collaborative culture is a key facet of a professional learning community (Louis & Marks, 1998). Professional learning communities are structures that enhance student achievement.

The development of shared decision-making structures and processes is the next dimension of redesigning the organization. This dimension refers to the formal and informal opportunities for school staff to give their professional input for the purpose of making decisions (Leithwood, 1999). These opportunities empower teachers to utilize their expertise in matters which affect the school. When teachers feel engaged in making significant decisions they develop new beliefs in their capacity to not only make a difference in the classroom, but across the whole school as well. Leithwood et al. (1996) identified several practices that have been shown to create and maintain structure which fosters shared decision making. These practices are listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Practices that Foster Shared Decision-making Practices

Shared Decision-making Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distributing the responsibility and power for leadership widely throughout the school • sharing decision-making power with staff • allowing staff to manage their own decision-making committees • taking staff opinion into account when making decisions • ensuring effective, group problem solving during meetings of the staff • providing autonomy for teachers (groups or individuals) in their decisions • altering working conditions so that staff have collaborative planning time and time to seek out information needed for planning and decision making • ensuring adequate involvement in decision making related to new initiatives in the school • creating opportunities for staff development

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) posit that there are two other leadership aspects that are important, although indirectly, in shaping the culture of a school. These are policy development and implementation and the creation of positive productive community relationships. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) suggest that transformational leaders play a vital role in strengthening relations with parents. This is accomplished through effective communication to parents and mediating, as needed, between teachers and parents.

The culture of a school and structures within the school which foster shared decision making are essential dimensions of transformational leadership. These are the dimensions that are uniquely aligned to the morale and disposition of the members of a school. Schein (1985) concluded that “the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture” (p. 5). Transformational leaders will utilize practices that align with the vision, goals, and expectations that also give individual consideration to school members with the purpose of enacting change within the organization.

Managing the instructional program. Research into practices involving the managerial aspect of school leadership has produced mixed results. Hallinger (2003) determined that management practices targeting the classroom and overseeing classroom outcomes has little effect on students. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) have shown that managerial practices have produced positive results in relation to student outcomes, which were very comparable to other leadership practices. Therefore, the practices of this set are the ones which focus on creating a strong and stable infrastructure that will enhance all other sets of practices. The leadership practices of this category are staffing the program, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity, and buffering staff from distractions to their work.

Staffing the program is essential to finding teachers whose interests and abilities are a match with school vision and goals (Leithwood et al., 2006). According to Gray (2000), the recruitment and retention of faculty is essential to leaders of schools faced with overcoming difficult conditions.

Providing instructional support is the set of practices aimed at improving and assessing instruction, directing the curriculum, and providing adequate resources that support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These practices are geared toward improving the outcomes of the school, such as student achievement. In schools that are facing obstacles to success, school leaders will create an environment focused on academic achievement (Leithwood et al., 2006).

Monitoring school activity (reporting and tracking student progress) has been shown to be an important duty of school leaders who are facing tough conditions (Gray, 2000). Leithwood and his colleagues point out that monitoring of operations and environment is one Yukl's (1989) 11 effective managerial practices. School leaders must be aware of a school's current academic situation.

Leithwood et al. (2006) assert that there is "value to organizational effectiveness of leaders preventing staff from being pulled in directions incompatible with agreed on goals" (p. 37). It is through exercise of this leadership function that principals buffer the instructional duties of the teacher from inherent daily expectations of the public (parents, media, special interest groups, and government). Successful leaders also use internal buffering to protect teachers from excessive student disciplinary actions.

Leithwood and his colleagues (2006) assert that these four categories of leadership practices encompass what it takes to be a successful leader. Therefore, leaders are not performing these activities daily. Rather, these sets of practices are the tools with which a school leader will

work to solve problems and collaborate with parents, teacher, students, and the community. According to Leithwood and his colleagues (2006), these core practices provide a structure of effective school leadership for current school leaders and the development of future leaders.

Criticism of Transformational Leadership

The acceptance and application of transformational leadership theory as a model of leadership has opened the door for criticisms or weaknesses of the theory. Many have argued that there is close alignment of transformational and charismatic theories, or other theories in which leader attributes are posed on a “great man.” Gronn (1995) has been openly critical of proponents of this style of leadership, with regard to their designation of prior forms of leadership as all transactional. Gronn (1996) has also criticized the research on this model as “tick-a-box or circle a number” (p. 16). He further views this model to relate the leader as an expert problem-solver, which he includes as a fault of assuming the leader as superior to subordinates (Gronn, 1996).

The idea of transformational being aligned with charismatic leadership has been specifically challenged by Yukl (1999). He notes that it has become almost commonplace to disregard the differences and treat the two as equivalent. Yukl (1999) asserts that many scholars view these concepts as distinct, but at least partially overlapping. He further insists that due to the ambiguous conceptuality of the terms the similarities often lie solely with the particular conceptual definition used for comparison.

In earlier models of charismatic leadership, a crisis was necessary for a charismatic leader to emerge. Yukl (1999) argues that transformational leadership behaviors that foster developing and empowering followers make it unlikely for followers to attach extraordinary qualities to the leader. “The more successful the leader is in developing and empowering followers, the less

dependent they will be on the leader for future advice and inspiration” (p. 299). He further maintains even in the occurrence where a leader may deal with an organizational crisis or accomplishment of a significant goal, attributions of charisma tied to the leader will not last. The current conditions of the organization will not last and the leader’s willingness to give credit to the team or share success will dissipate any personal identification (Yukl, 1999).

Yukl’s (1999) evaluation of conceptual weaknesses of transformational and charismatic leadership theories attempts to provide insight into transformational leadership by providing a framework of the conceptual weaknesses. Some of his weaknesses are ambiguity about the underlying influence processes, overemphasis on dyadic processes, ambiguity about transformational behaviors, and ambiguity about transactional leadership. Yukl’s work is included here merely as source of critique of transformational leadership. It is significant to note that Yukl’s (1999) evaluation does not address Leithwood’s model of transformational leadership. He merely addresses the models we view as “classical” views of transformational.

Leithwood (2006) has noted that many of those who criticize the theory of transformational leadership do not acknowledge the differences in his model compared to more “classical” models. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) specifically address at least three of Yukl’s conceptual weaknesses. First the argument that there is ambiguity about behaviors is not valid because Leithwood’s model explicitly provides for specificity of practices. Second, the omission of transformational behaviors is addressed through the wide range of dimensions in Leithwood’s model that are not found in other models. Yukl’s assertion that there is an overemphasis on the dyadic processes (influence on the individual) is specifically countered by the third category of practices, redesigning the organization, which focuses on organization-wide conditions as well as group processes (Leithwood, 2006). Leithwood argues that the “lack of attention to model

specification is an indication of a larger problem plaguing educational leadership studies” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 225).

Development of Academic Optimism

In recent years, school research into facets of education that can make an impact on student achievement, regardless of socioeconomic status, has led to the development of a new organizational construct, academic optimism. This construct arose after consistent results of research showed that collective teacher efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000), academic emphasis (Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Lee & Bryk, 1989), and faculty trust in students and parents (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001) were each strongly linked to student achievement even after controlling for socioeconomic status (SES) (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). It was Hoy and his colleagues (2006) who first asserted that these three attributes are so closely related that they may indeed measure a single latent school trait which would characterize collective perceptions and attitudes among teachers with respect to the potential of the school to impact student achievement.

Hoy and his colleagues theorized that these three dimensions of organizational characteristics actually worked together to form “a single powerful force” which could explain school performance (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, p. 427). This force, academic optimism, was actually a collective belief among school faculty that not only the conditions for improved student performance exist, but student performance will increase. The three dimensions of academic optimism will be thoroughly discussed in the following sections.

Collective efficacy. Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory in relation to the notion of human agency was the foundation for the development of collective efficacy.

Collective efficacy is a group application of the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as a person's belief that he could perform appropriate tasks that would result in the attainment of desired satisfaction.

According to Bandura (1997), individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to seek challenges, set higher goals, put forth higher levels of exertion to accomplish goals, and give up less easily. All of which is further supported by the supposition that humans make intentional choices based on beliefs of expected results (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's social cognitive theory's focus on the concept of human agency was central to the development of the construct of teacher efficacy.

According to Bandura (1989), self-efficacy was derived from four sources of cognitive processing: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. Experiences in which an individual's effort produces positive outcomes are mastery experiences. These experiences reinforce and strengthen desired individual behaviors. Bandura asserted that mastery experiences have the most impact on beliefs of self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences are those in which individuals compare their likely outcomes to the outcomes of others through observations. Individuals can gain needed confidence or increased self-efficacy in their abilities by observing positive outcomes of others in similar situations. Social persuasion occurs when a person's belief that he or she can produce positive results is encouraged or motivated by a group.

Social persuasion can give a person the needed support to accept and attempt new challenges. Bandura (1997) described affective states as the emotions and/or feelings within an individual which affect the individual's willingness to engage in particular actions or behaviors.

These emotions may be the result of stress, anxiety, or depression, which shifts focus away from desired tasks. Bandura (1997) determined that individuals with a higher sense of self-efficacy would accept new challenges, set more challenging goals, and be more determined to accomplish goals.

In 1997 Bandura, asserted that groups of individuals can develop collective beliefs and behavior characteristics about their shared purpose and accomplishments. He emphasized that this organizational belief in the group's ability to accomplish organizational goals was collective efficacy. Bandura declared that although self-efficacy and collective efficacy are similar in sources, function, and processes they are distinct constructs. Collective efficacy in schools is found in the collective belief of teachers that their actions can and will impact student achievement (Goddard et al., 2004; Hoy et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

In 1993, Bandura found that schools that exhibited a strong sense of collective efficacy performed at higher rates than those schools that had lower rates of collective efficacy. Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) and Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) conducted more studies in which collective efficacy was the main variable. Their studies determined that student achievement could be explained by collective efficacy. Furthermore, collective efficacy was a stronger determinant than SES or academic emphasis.

Applying previous research, Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) established a positive relationship among student performance and three types of efficacy beliefs. These links were established in the self-efficacy beliefs among students (Pajares, 1994, 1997), self-efficacy beliefs among teachers (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and the collective efficacy beliefs of teachers about the school (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

Ross has been a leading researcher into the connection between teacher collective efficacy and school leadership. Ross and Gray (2006) found that transformational leadership had a significant effect on teacher collective efficacy. From his research Ross determined that specific principal tasks could raise teacher collective efficacy. These tasks were influence teacher perceptions of achievement data, help teachers set appropriate goals, and provide teachers with high quality professional development.

Ross's research provides continued support for Hoy and Woolfolk (1993), who determined a teacher's sense of efficacy is increased through accomplishment of daily tasks that are viewed as meaningful. Therefore, it is incumbent upon school leadership to foster school climates that build teacher collective efficacy, which will, in turn, have a positive impact on student success and overall school performance (Hoy et al., 2006).

Academic emphasis. The extent to which a school strives for academic excellence and high academic achievement is the academic emphasis of the school (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). This means that the school has set high achievable goals, there is a serious and orderly learning environment, and there is high student motivation for academic success (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). Academic emphasis is often synonymous with academic press, achievement press, and academic rigor. Academic emphasis is an organizational trait that is embedded in the perceptions of the individuals of the organization. According to Goddard et al. (2000), the beliefs of the group exceed the beliefs of the individuals and exhibit special characteristics. A strong sense of academic emphasis within a school will put demands on students to succeed, and on teachers to expect high achievement (Goddard et al., 2000).

Lee and Bryk (1989) began the inquiry of study on academic emphasis and student achievement. Their study revealed that a school's academic focus was linked to student achievement regardless of SES and minority status. They found that there was less distribution of achievement among races in schools that had orderly and disciplined learning environments. Several studies have determined a positive relationship between academic emphasis and academic achievement (Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990).

Hoy and colleagues (Hoy et. al., 1991; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy & Tarter, 1997) focused on academic emphasis as a component of a healthy school climate. According to Hoy and Hannum (1997), the organizational climate of a school is "the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another" (p. 291). These internal characteristics are measured by the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI). This instrument measures the six dimensions of organizational school climate, which includes academic emphasis.

Hoy and his colleagues' (1991) comprehensive review of school climate research revealed that the actions of principals can have significant, although indirect, influence on student learning. Through the development of orderly and disciplined learning environments, placing a strong emphasis on academic accomplishments and successes, and fostering high performance goals for students, principals can influence student achievement (Hoy et al., 1991).

In 2000, Goddard and colleagues asserted that school climates that exhibit a strong academic emphasis would have normative effects that strengthen teaching, learning, and student achievement. Their assumption was that schools with high academic emphasis have norms of higher expectations for student achievement that are all-encompassing and thoughtful; the organizational climate will force members to strive to meet the high expectations for academic success (Goddard et al., 2000).

Teachers responded to survey items along a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from *very frequently occurs* to *rarely occurs*. Sample items are listed below (Hoy et al., 1991):

- Students respect others who get good grades.
- The learning environment is orderly and serious.
- Students make provisions to acquire extra help from teachers.
- Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.

Their study, conducted in urban elementary schools, determined that academic emphasis is positively related to differences in student achievement in reading and math when controlling for SES. This study confirmed the philosophy that academic emphasis fosters student academic success by establishing an instructional environment where teachers attempt to work with purpose to improve student learning (Goddard et al., 2000).

Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) conducted further inquiry into the connection between collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and student achievement. They determined that higher measures of collective efficacy generate higher student achievement, but also that increased student achievement generates greater measures of collective efficacy. These results led to the conclusion that academic emphasis works through teachers' collective efficacy rather than having a direct impact on academic achievement. Hoy and colleagues (2006) further asserted that academic emphasis has the greatest influence when there is a strong climate of collective efficacy.

Recent research into the impact of instructional leadership and academic emphasis on student achievement by Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005) revealed that academic emphasis had a direct effect on student achievement. The study further revealed that instructional leadership did

not have a direct effect on student achievement. They concluded that instructional leadership worked through academic emphasis to influence student achievement.

Faculty trust in students and parents. Similar to collective efficacy and academic emphasis, faculty trust in students and parents is a group belief within schools that operates from an open and healthy school climate and has a positive influence on the success and effectiveness of the school (Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy et al., 1990; Tarter et al., 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, 2000). Many researchers have argued trust is an essential school characteristic that influences student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) wrote that research on organizational trust arose from the cold war era in which psychologists and philosophers considered the nationwide phenomenon of distrust and detachment from the governmental establishment among young adults. It was the effective schools research that introduced us to the idea of trust between schools and families, but this research did not clearly establish the link between schools, student achievement, and school-parental relationships (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) fostered the development of trust in schools as a construct through a series of studies that examined faculty trust in principal, colleagues, and students and parents. Upon completing an extensive review of the literature on trust they established six facets of trust: willingness to risk vulnerability, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. This led to defining trust as “a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest,

and open” (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 429). The facets of trust are described in the following paragraphs.

Vulnerability. The “willingness to be vulnerable” is a necessary condition for trust, because people do not have a need to trust anyone to whom they are not vulnerable (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Vulnerability is a reliance on the actions of others and a belief that those actions will not be detrimental, but favorable to the vulnerable party (Hoy et al., 2005). There is a presence of trust when the vulnerable party acts in spite of recognized vulnerability.

Benevolence. Benevolence is the belief that a person’s interests will be protected (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) assert that benevolence is one of the most common aspects of trust. The absence of benevolence will cause teachers to be distrustful rather than supportive (Hoy et al., 2005).

Reliability. Butler and Cantrell (1984) define reliability as a belief that one can count on others to follow through with their commitments. According to Mishra (1996), having trust in someone is the confidence that he or she will perform as we expected them. We can depend on those we trust to do as they say they will.

Competence. Competence is a person’s ability to complete expected tasks properly within certain standards (Hoy et al., 2005). Trust instills a belief that a person can meet our expectations of performance of responsibilities.

Honesty. Honesty is a crucial prerequisite of trust. Hoy and colleagues (2005) stated that when actions and intentions are united, honesty, character, and integrity are exposed. The actions and words of a person must be aligned (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Openness. Openness is the degree a person is willing to share and be vulnerable. Those who exhibit the characteristics of being open display a vulnerability to others, which fosters trust from others (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

The importance of these facets of trust will vary based on individuals and circumstances. According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), there are a number of organizational characteristics that influence trust in organizations. Some of these are structures, policies, leadership, and culture (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) studied trust as a collective school trait that explained the degree to which teachers, as a whole, displayed the many facets of trust. From this research they developed an instrument to measure trust as a school characteristic that positively related collective teacher efficacy and academic achievement. The resulting instrument was the Omnibus Trust survey, which was scaled along a Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Sample items are listed below (Goddard et al., 2001):

- Students here are secretive.
- Teachers in this school trust their students.
- Students in this school care about each other.
- Teachers think that most parents do a good job.
- Teachers can believe what parents tell them.

The results of the study showed that the questions loaded strongly on three factors: trust in the principal, trust in colleagues, and trust in students and parents. Trust in students and trust in parents aligned in a single construct, trust in clients (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Further study and analysis revealed a correlation among faculty trust in the principal, faculty trust in colleagues, and faculty trust in clients (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

In 2000, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy completed an extensive study of trust in schools linking faculty trust in students and parents to school effectiveness and student achievement in reading and math. The researchers posited that trust manifested itself in a variety of ways in the relationship among teachers, students, parents, and school administrators. Some aspects of trust that affect these relationships were trust helps facilitate open and honest communication and aids decision-making and problem-solving processes; trust protects students and parents from the vulnerability of misunderstanding or confusion; trust reduces confusion; trust reduces tension, suspicion, and resentment; lack of trust increases the likelihood that rules may be needed to sustain order. This study established an indirect link between faculty trust and student achievement through collective efficacy even when controlling for SES.

In 1999, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran established that schools that exhibited a high level of faculty trust in students and parents also exhibited higher levels of shared decision-making with both faculty and parents. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) continued this inquiry by exploring the relationship of trust in schools to communication, collaboration, school climate, organizational citizenship, and proliferation of rules. They proposed that schools that exhibited a climate of open, honest communication would be high in trust. They further hypothesized that principals who display trust in teachers through decision-making processes would also increase all aspects of trust in a school.

Theoretical Framework

In the preceding review of the literature on transformational leadership and academic optimism, an assumption can be made that there is an indication of a relationship between the

two concepts. This study provides evidence that transformative leadership behaviors can and will impact the organizational trait of academic optimism.

Transformational Leadership and Academic Optimism

The four dimensions of transformational leadership, setting goals, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program represent leadership behaviors that will collectively and individually enhance academic optimism. The three dimensions of academic optimism, collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust in clients are representative of three important aspects of a school: the teachers, the structures (programs), and the clients. Transformational leadership behaviors address and provide support for each of these aspects.

Transformational leadership behaviors as previously described can be reasonably linked to the components of academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis). Specific leader practices, such as providing colleagues with overall sense of purpose; initiating processes that engage staff in the collective development of a shared vision; expecting teams of teachers (departments/teams) and individuals to regularly engage in goal setting and reviewing progress toward those goals; expecting staff to be innovative, hard working, and professional; provide coaching for staff members who need it; offer encouragement to individuals for good performance; providing opportunities and resources for collaborative staff work; and using all available opportunities to communicate the school's vision to staff, students, parents, and other members of the school community, are examples which provide support for a school strong in academic optimism.

Further support for research into leadership behaviors was supported by McGuigan and Hoy (2006), who found that an enabling school structure enhanced academic optimism. An enabling school structure is the extent to which the structures and process of the school support and enable teachers' work (Hoy, 2003, Hoy & Sweetland, 2000). This research contributes to the idea that principals make a difference in schools by setting "up structures and processes that help teachers do their work" (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 20).

Leithwood and colleagues' (2005) review of transformational leadership research produced findings in which this type of leadership had positive effects on several mediating variables (school culture, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, changed teacher practices, planning and strategies for change, pedagogical or instructional quality, organizational learning, and collective teacher efficacy). Academic optimism appears to be a good fit for another organizational characteristic that can be positively related to transformational leadership.

Academic Optimism and Student Performance

In the last few decades educational research has focused on school improvement, particularly improving student achievement. Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy's (2006) identification of academic optimism pulls in three school traits, collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust, which have been empirically proven to increase student performance (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Bandura, 1993; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Goddard, Hoy et al., 2000; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1998; Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1995; Lee & Bryk, 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Improving student academic performance should be a primary goal for all school leaders. Hoy et al. (1991) proved that principal activities focused on the learning environment, emphasis on academic achievement, and establishing high performance goals can influence student achievement. The activities described by Hoy et al. are essential behaviors for transformational leaders.

Rationale and Hypotheses

This study proposed that there is a direct relationship between principal behaviors associated with transformational leaders and the academic optimism of a school. Much of the research on transformational leadership has touched on concepts directly and indirectly related to academic optimism. Bass (1985) found that transformative leaders use inspiration to communicate school vision and build a strong school culture. Yukl and Fleet (1992) asserted that open communication informed teachers of their significance in accomplishing the mission of the school.

Podsakoff et al., (1990) declared that transformational approaches to developing goals were behaviors that fostered cooperation among employees in working toward and accomplishing a common goal. Yukl (1989) determined that a transformative leader's willingness to challenge assumptions and take risks were strong factors in building employee motivation. McGuigan and Hoy's (2006) finding that an enabling school structure enhances academic optimism provides support that academic optimism can be strengthened by factors controlled by the leadership of the school. Thus, the proposal is made that transformational leadership will positively increase the academic optimism within a school.

H1: The more transformational leadership style of the principal of a school, the more academic optimism within the school.

Previous research has established a direct link between transformational leadership behaviors and certain dimensions of academic optimism. Podsakoff et al. (1990) asserted that individual support provided by transformative leaders build trust within the school. Avolio and Bass (1988) stated that contingent reward, a component of Leithwood's model of transformational leadership, increased the self-efficacy of teachers through the use of frequent feedback. Ross and Gray (2004) confirmed that transformational leadership increased the teacher collective efficacy of a school. Therefore, the following supportive hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Each category of transformational leadership will be significantly related to the academic optimism within the school.

Leithwood's (1999) model of transformational leadership is an adaptation of the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) specifically for school leaders. Therefore, this study also sought to provide support for his model and measure by providing a factor analysis of the four categories of transformational leadership. Therefore, the following supportive hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Transformational leadership is a function of four categories of behavior.

This study sought to establish a direct link between transformational leadership and academic optimism. The study may further support previous studies which have shown a positive link between transformational leadership and the three components of academic optimism; collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and faculty trust in clients. This study may show that transformational principal behaviors such as setting direction through visions, goals, and high expectations; developing people through individualized support, intellectual stimulations, and modeling practices; redesigning the organization through culture, structure, and policies;

managing the instructional program through staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities, and buffering staff from distractions to their work, will enhance not only each individual component of academic optimism, but the overall level of academic optimism within a school.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the sample, collection of data, research survey items, and procedures for data analysis that were used in this study. The researcher submitted a request to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects requesting permission to conduct the study. The request included (a) purpose of the study, (b) procedures, (c) risks and benefits, (d) informed consent statement, and (e) letter to the participants.

The purpose of this study was to respond to the need for dynamic leaders in schools. This study explored the relationship of transformational leaders and the academic optimism within public elementary schools in Alabama. Transformational leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on school-wide organizational characteristics. Academic optimism has been shown to have positive effects on student achievement, even after controlling for SES. This study will be beneficial for principal leaders in schools. The results will provide insight into leadership behaviors which may indirectly increase student achievement.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 67 elementary schools in Alabama. Steps were taken to solicit participation of urban, suburban, and rural schools. Participants of this study included K-6 schools or a combination that at least included fourth grade. Each school had a teacher faculty that consisted of at least 15 or more certified teachers. Survey instruments were sent out to 80 schools. The high response rate (84%) could be attributed to the initial verbal

contact with principals to consent to participate prior to mailing survey instruments, with follow-up phone calls or email contact.

The data were collected at regularly scheduled faculty meetings by non-administrative personnel. Each respondent was guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality, and the option to refuse participation. The sample for this study was not random and caution should be used when generalizing the results.

Research Instruments

The data for the study consisted of responses to surveys of Likert-type items. There were two primary variables of interest for this study: transformational leadership and academic optimism. Both of these constructs were operationally defined using instruments developed from previous studies of experienced researchers. Each of these variables and their elements are operationally defined below in terms of their measurement, validity, and reliability.

Leithwood's Leadership Instrument

The transformational leadership instrument consists of 20 items measuring the perceptions of teachers with regards that their principal has the ability to lead the school and its members amidst changing demands on the organization. Participants respond to items along a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The instrument used in this survey was one that Leithwood and colleagues used in several studies and adapted over several years of study of transformational leadership (1997, 1999, 2001, 2006). The validity of the survey by Leithwood and his colleagues is verified both through the recognition of the authors' authority in the field of transformational leadership and its use in numerous studies. The

instrument used for this study was received from Leithwood via email as being used in his most recent research.

The instrument measures four dimensions of transformational leader behaviors as identified by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000). These dimensions are setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. Sample items regarding school leadership included, “Gives staff a sense of overall purpose,” “Demonstrates high expectations for your work with students,” “Models a high level of professional practice,” and “Regularly observes classroom activities.”

School Academic Optimism Survey (SAOS)

Academic optimism was operationally defined using the SAOS, which is a combination of three subtests: collective teacher efficacy, teacher trust in clients, and the academic emphasis of the teachers. These three components work together to define academic optimism as a collective variable. The instrument consists of 30 items scored on a Likert-type scale. Twenty-two of the items were scored on a range of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Seven of the items were scored on a range of 1 (*rarely*) to 4 (*very often*). The elements of the subtests are described below.

Collective teacher efficacy was developed from the short form of the Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The instrument consisted of 12 items measured along a 6-point continuum ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). These scores represented a low to high score of a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy. Sample items included, “Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students,” “Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for

students here (score reversed),” “These students come to school ready to learn,” and “Students here just aren’t motivated to learn (score reversed).” Previous research has demonstrated the construct validity and reliability of the scale (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, 2004).

Teacher trust in clients was operationally defined using the short form of the Omnibus Trust Scale developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003). This aspect of academic optimism consisted of 10 items measured along a 6-point continuum ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). These scores represented a low to high score of a teacher’s sense of trust in students and parents. Sample items of the scale included, “Teachers in this school can trust their students,” “Parents in this school are reliable in their commitment,” “Students in this school can be counted on to do their work,” and “Teachers in this school believe students are competent learners.” The reliability and construct validity of the scale have been supported in several factor-analytic studies (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Academic emphasis was operationally defined using 8 items that are a part of the Organizational Health Inventory (Hoy et al., 1991; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy & Tarter, 1997). These 8 Likert-type items were scored using a scale of 1 (*rarely*) to 5 (*very often*). Sample items include, “Students respect others who get good grades,” “Students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them,” “The school sets high standards for academic performance,” and “Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.” Previous research has demonstrated construct validity and reliability of the subscale (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

Data Analysis

The data derived from this study have been aggregated to the school level, $N = 67$. Teacher survey instruments assessing transformational leadership and academic optimism were scored to produce aggregate school measures of each of these variables, as well as the subtest of each. Scoring was done in a two-stage process that first calculated school means for each item, for each variable. The means for each item were then averaged to calculate the overall school mean for each variable.

Each response was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The scales for negative items were reversed. A complete statistical analysis (mean, standard deviation, range, bi-variate correlation, linear regression, reliability analysis, factor analysis) of the data was completed, utilizing SPSS for the purposes of answering the research questions of this study. More details about the specific analysis procedures will be provided in Chapter 4, Results.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter sets forth the results of the data analysis of the relationship between transformational leadership and academic optimism. The first section covers the descriptive statistics. This is followed by a section that gives results of reliability and factor analysis testing. The next section displays the results of correlations testing. Another section will share the results of hypotheses testing. The final section of this chapter explains un-hypothesized findings from this study.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample is comprised of 67 elementary schools in Alabama. The high participation rate of 84% (67 of 80) is probably best explained by each school's prior consent to participate. There were 470 respondents with at least five teachers responding from each school. Socioeconomic status (SES) was described by participation in the free-reduced lunch program at each school.

Transformational leadership and academic optimism were each measured by survey instruments using Likert-type items. School mean scores for each item were calculated, and reverse scoring was used where applicable. Item score means were aggregated to produce a single school-level score. Therefore, in each case, the higher the score, the higher the level of the construct under study. Table 10 shows descriptive statistics of means, standard deviations, and range of the tested variables.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistic

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Optimism	6.19	9.19	15.38	12.28	1.08
Collective Efficacy	1.92	3.61	5.53	4.67	.40
Faculty Trust	2.95	2.90	5.85	4.28	.53
Academic Emphasis	1.38	2.63	4.00	3.33	.23
Transformational Leadership	7.34	12.66	20.00	17.51	1.71
Setting Direction	1.85	3.15	5.00	4.51	.41
Developing People	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.33	.50
Redesign Org.	1.95	3.05	5.00	4.33	.44
Managing Instructional Program	1.98	3.02	5.00	4.33	.45
SES	90	8.00	98.0	48.39	22.79

All of the variables studied showed a sufficient range of values to test for effects. For each of the survey variables, the standard deviation ranged from .23 to 1.71. Mean scores ranged between 3.33 and 4.67 for each of the sub-scale measures. The mean score for academic optimism was 12.28, which is a composite score of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis, with a range of 9.19 to 15.38. The mean score for transformational leadership was 17.51, which is a composite score of setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program, with a range of 12.55 to 20. The data collected for SES of each school in this study had a range of 90 (98%-8%) and a mean of 48.39.

Reliability and Factor Analysis Testing

Transformational leadership was measured using an instrument developed by Leithwood over years of research into this construct (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006;

Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). The internal reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha Coefficient of Reliability. The scale had high internal validity ($\alpha = .98$).

Reliability was also measured for each of the categories of transformational leadership, setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program, which ranged from acceptable (.66) to high (.94). Table 11 indicates the reliability coefficients for the transformational leadership and the categories.

Table 11

Leadership Survey Alpha Reliability Results

Variable	Number of Items	α
Transformational Leadership Survey	20	.98
Setting Direction	4	.72
Developing People	5	.66
Redesigning the Organization	4	.75
Managing the Instructional Program	7	.94

Academic optimism is a latent school construct that is measured by three dimensions: collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. Academic optimism was measured using the SAOS, which is comprised of the three subtests, collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). The reliability and construct validity of the subscales have been supported in several factor analytic studies (Goddard, et al., 2000, 2004; Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Hoy, et al., 1991; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). The alpha coefficient of reliability of the SAOS for this study was .95. The reliability alpha for the sub-tests ranged from good reliability (.84) to high reliability (.96). The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Academic Optimism Survey Alpha Reliability Results

Source	Number of Items	α
SAOS	30	.95
Collective Efficacy	12	.84
Faculty Trust	10	.96
Academic Emphasis	8	.86

A factor analysis of the instrument was conducted for the purposes of testing the third hypothesis of this study. A principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation resulted in two factors, with one factor explaining over 73% of the item variance, with an eigenvalue of 14.56 and all items loading over .68. The second factor, which describes the encouragement of data use, had an eigenvalue of 1.21 and explained 6% of the variance. Notwithstanding two items loading on two factors, the fact that all items loaded on one factor is persuasive evidence of the stability of transformational leadership. The two items loading on the second factor loaded high on both factors.

Table 13

Factor Analysis of Transformational Leadership Instrument

Item	Factor	
	I	II
1. Gives staff a sense of overall purpose.	.89	.07
2. Helps clarify the reasons for your school's improvement initiatives.	.90	.03
3. Provides useful assistance to you in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.	.91	-.09
4. Demonstrates high expectations for your work with students.	.78	.14
5. Gives you individual support to help you improve your teaching practices.	.92	-.20
6. Encourages you to consider new ideas for your teaching.	.90	-.12

(table continues)

Item	Factor	
	I	II
7. Models a high level of professional practice.	.92	-.14
8. Develops an atmosphere of caring and trust.	.84	-.39
9. Promotes leadership development among teachers.	.89	-.11
10. Encourages collaborative work among staff.	.86	.05
11. Ensures wide participation in decisions about school improvement.	.90	-.17
12. Engages parents in the school's improvement efforts.	.79	.07
13. Is effective in building community support for the school's improvement efforts.	.81	<.00
14. Provides or locates resources to help staff improve their teaching.	.94	-.14
15. Regularly observes classroom activities.	.79	.01
16. After observing classroom activities, works with teachers to improve their teaching.	.89	-.09
17. Frequently discusses educational issues with you.	.85	.09
18. Buffers teachers from distractions to their instruction.	.84	-.01
19. Encourages you to use data in your work.	.68	.63
20. Encourages data use in planning for individual student needs.	.72	.69

Further factor analyses of the categories of transformational leadership using principal axis factoring with a varimax rotation found that each category loaded onto single factor (see Table 14). This result provided support for the third hypothesis, transformational leadership is function of four categories of behavior, by showing that the instrument is consistently measuring one factor, transformational leadership.

Table 14

Factor Analysis of Categories of Transformational Leadership

Setting Direction	Factor
Item	I
1. Gives staff a sense of overall purpose.	.94
2. Helps clarify the reasons for your school's improvement initiatives.	.93
3. Provides useful assistance to you in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.	.90
4. Demonstrates high expectations for your work with students.	.86
<hr/>	
Developing People	
Item	
5. Gives you individual support to help you improve your teaching practices.	.96
6. Encourages you to consider new ideas for your teaching.	.88
7. Models a high level of professional practice.	.95
8. Develops an atmosphere of caring and trust.	.92
9. Promotes leadership development among teachers.	.88
<hr/>	
Redesigning the Organization	
Item	
10. Encourages collaborative work among staff.	.84
11. Ensures wide participation in decisions about school improvement.	.87
12. Engages parents in the school's improvement efforts.	.88
13. Is effective in building community support for the school's improvement efforts.	.90
<hr/>	
Managing the Instructional Program	
Item	
14. Provides or locates resources to help staff improve their teaching.	.87
15. Regularly observes classroom activities.	.84
16. After observing classroom activities, works with teachers to improve their teaching.	.89
17. Frequently discusses educational issues with you.	.90
18. Buffers teachers from distractions to their instruction.	.85
19. Encourages you to use data in your work.	.73
20. Encourages data use in planning for individual student needs.	.78

The category of setting direction, items 1-4, loaded onto one factor that explained 82% of the item variance, with an eigenvalue of 3.29 and all items loading over .86. The second category

of developing people, items 5-9, loaded onto a single factor that explained 84% of the item variance, with an eigenvalue of 4.21 and all items loading over .88. The third category of redesigning the organization, items 10-13, loaded onto a single factor that explained 76% of the item variation, with an eigenvalue of 3.05 and all items loading over .84. The fourth category of managing the instructional program, items 14-20, loaded onto a single category that explained 71% of the item variation, with an eigenvalue of 4.95 and all items loading over .73.

Correlations

Correlation analyses were used for initial testing of the hypotheses that transformational leadership would be related to academic optimism and that the categories of transformational leadership would each be related to academic optimism. Table 15 shows the inter-correlation matrix of the Pearson Correlation Coefficients for all the variables in this study. The zero-order correlations for all variables were significant at $p < .01$.

Table 15

Pearson Correlation Coefficients of All Variables

	AO	CE	FT	AE	TL	SD	DP	RO	MIP
Academic Optimism									
Collective Efficacy	.95**								
Faculty Trust	.97**	.87**							
Academic Emphasis	.79**	.65**	.67**						
Transformational Leadership	.48**	.42**	.39**	.61**					
Setting Direction	.45**	.38**	.38**	.59**	.95**				
Developing People	.40**	.34**	.33**	.52**	.96**	.88**			
Redesigning the Organization	.49**	.45**	.39**	.60**	.94**	.86**	.87**		
Managing the Instructional Program	.49**	.45**	.39**	.61**	.95**	.86**	.89**	.86**	

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$

The initial hypothesis, the more transformational leadership style of the principal of a school, the more academic optimism within the school, was confirmed by correlation analysis. A zero-order correlation showed there was a significant relationship between transformational leadership and academic optimism ($r = .48, p < .01$).

The results of correlation analysis on each category of transformational leadership showed support for the second hypothesis, each category of transformational leadership will be significantly related to the academic optimism within the school. A zero-order correlation of the categories of transformational leadership and academic optimism showed that each of the categories was positively related to the academic optimism of the school. Setting direction was significant, $r = .45$ at $p < .01$. Developing people was significant, $r = .40$ at $p < .01$. Redesigning the organization was significant, $r = .49$ at $p < .01$. Finally, managing the instructional program was significant, $r = .49$ at $p < .01$.

A multiple regression analysis of academic optimism onto the categories comprising transformational leadership (setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program) was performed. The results of this regression showed a significant positive correlation between the composite of the categories of transformational leadership and academic optimism ($R = .53, p < .01$). This regression showed that the combined influence of the categories of transformational leadership explains about 23% of the variance in academic optimism (adjusted R square = .23).

Table 16

Correlation and Regression Statistics of Academic Optimism and Categories of Transformational Leadership (N = 67)

	r	β
Setting Direction	.45**	.12
Developing People	.40**	-.38
Redesigning the Organization	.49**	.38
Managing the Instructional Program	.49**	.39
		R = .53
		Adj. R Square = .23**

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$

This test did not reveal any significant relationship between any of the sub-scales of transformational leadership and academic optimism. This result supports the construct of transformational leadership with no single category being more significant than the others.

Test of Hypotheses

A simple correlation between transformational leadership and academic optimism was performed to test the first two hypotheses of this study. A multiple linear regression was performed to determine the multiple correlations between the categories of transformational leadership and academic optimism.

Zero-order correlations supported Hypotheses 1 and 2 (see Table 15). Transformational leadership showed significance to academic optimism ($r = .48, p < .01$). Additional correlation testing revealed significance among the categories of transformational leadership and academic optimism. Setting direction was significant to academic optimism ($r = .45, p < .01$). Developing people was significant to academic optimism ($r = .40, p < .01$). Redesigning the organization was

significant to academic optimism ($r = .49, p < .01$). Finally, managing the instructional program was significant to academic optimism ($r = .49, p < .01$).

A multiple regression was computed with the categories of transformational leadership (setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program) entered as the independent variables and academic optimism as the dependent variable. The results of this test showed that the composite of these variables was significant to academic optimism ($R = .53, p < .01$). None of the individual categories was found to be a significant predictor of academic optimism.

A factor analysis was completed to test the third hypothesis, transformational leadership is a function of four categories of behavior. The results of this test showed that all of the items loaded onto a single factor with two of the items loading high on a second factor also (see Table 17). These results provide confirmation that the categories of transformational leadership determined by Leithwood and colleagues (1999; 2006) do indeed serve as a function of one factor, transformational leadership.

Un-hypothesized Findings

The addition of socioeconomic status to the regression of academic optimism on transformational leadership in order to control for school wealth strengthened the relationship between the two variables. The regression controlling for SES still showed a positive correlation between transformational leadership and academic optimism ($\beta = .37, p < .01$). An additional regression of academic optimisms onto all of the categories of transformational leadership simultaneously while controlling for SES found a significant relationship ($R = .85, p < .01$). SES and the four categories accounted for 70% of the variation in academic optimism (see Table 17).

Table 17

Correlation and Regression Statistics of Academic Optimism and Categories of Transformational Leadership and SES (N = 67)

	<i>r</i>	β
Setting Direction	.45**	.22
Developing People	.40**	-.19
Redesigning the Organization	.49**	-.06
Managing the Instructional Program	.49**	.42**
SES	.75**	.70**
		<i>R</i> = .85
		Adj. <i>R</i> Square = .70**

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p \leq .01$

Controlling for SES showed that the category, managing the instructional program, was statistically significant ($r = .42, p \leq .01$). The possible significance of this finding will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and academic optimism. This chapter will discuss findings, identify implications, and make recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Research Findings

This study posited that transformational leadership will have a positive influence on academic optimism. This study further hypothesized that each category of transformational leadership; setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program would each have a positive influence on the academic optimism of a school. The analysis of the data from this study confirmed each of these hypotheses.

The third hypothesis of this study was to determine whether transformational leadership was indeed a function of four dimensions of behavior. A factor analysis of the transformational leadership instrument revealed that all items loaded onto one factor with a high reliability. Each category of transformational leadership loaded onto a single factor. Two of the items additionally loaded onto a second factor greater than .60. These results provide quantitative support for the third hypothesis. The specific results from all statistical analysis will be discussed below.

Transformational Leadership was Positively Related to Academic Optimism ($r = .48, p < .01$)

The relationship of transformational leadership to academic optimism remained statistically significant even when controlling for socioeconomic status ($\beta = .37, p < .01$). A multiple linear regression of academic optimism onto the categories of transformational leadership showed a positive correlation between all the elements of transformational leadership simultaneously and academic optimism ($R = .53, p < .01$). None of the individual categories was determined to be statistically significant.

Setting Direction was Positively Related to Academic Optimism ($r = .45, p < .01$)

Setting direction remained statistically significant even when controlling for socioeconomic status ($\beta = .36, p < .01$). Setting direction was measured using items such as, “Gives staff a sense of overall purpose,” and “Demonstrates high expectations for your work with students.”

Developing People was Positively Correlated to Academic Optimism ($r = .40, p < .01$)

This relationship remained intact even when controlling for socioeconomic status ($\beta = .32, p < .01$). This category was assessed with statements such as, “Models a high level of professional practice,” and “Promotes leadership development among teachers.”

Redesigning the Organization was Positively Related to Academic Optimism ($r = .49, p < .01$)

When controlling for socioeconomic status this relationship remained statistically significant ($\beta = .32, p < .01$). Data for this category were collected through responses to items

such as, “Ensures wide participation in decisions about school improvement,” and “Engages parents in the school’s improvement efforts.”

Managing the Instructional Program was Positively Correlated to Academic Optimism ($r = .49, p < .01$)

This relationship remained statistically significant even when controlling for socioeconomic status ($\beta = .39, p < .01$). “Frequently discusses educational issues with you” and “Buffers teachers from distractions to their instruction” are examples of items used to measure managing the instructional program.

A Factor Analysis Confirmed that Setting Direction, Developing People, Redesigning the Organization, and Managing the Instructional Program Comprise a Single Construct, Transformational Leadership

All of the items measuring each category of transformational leadership loaded onto one factor. Two of the items loaded onto two factors. The two items loading onto two factors came from the category of managing the instructional program. The two items were “Encourages you to use data in your work” and “Encourages data use in planning for individual student needs.”

Findings not Hypothesized

Socioeconomic (SES) status was not a component of this study, but was added to the statistical analysis of the data because SES has been shown to have an influence on school outcomes (Sirin, 2005). The original zero-order correlation of transformational leadership and academic optimism found that the relationship between transformational leadership and academic optimism was significant ($r = .48, p < .01$). This relationship remained significant when a multiple linear regression was used to control for SES ($\beta = .37, p < .01$).

A regression analysis of academic optimism onto the categories of transformational leadership showed that all of the categories worked together to have a significant relationship with academic optimism ($R = .53, p < .01$) with none of the categories shown as a significant predictor. When SES was added to the regression of academic optimism onto all of the elements of transformational leadership ($R = .85, p < .01$), the category of managing the instructional program was found to be a significant predictor of academic optimism ($\beta = .42, p \leq .01$).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results of this study confirmed the theoretical framework set forth in Chapter 2. Transformational leadership was found to be positively related to academic optimism. The findings of this study also confirmed the hypothesis that each category of academic optimism would be positively related to academic optimism. An analysis of the data provided support for the hypothesis that the four categories of transformational leadership do indeed measure transformational leadership.

Leithwood's transformational leadership model provides school leaders with specific sets of practices that can easily be implemented into any school. His model addresses the daily management of school activities, as well as providing direction, establishing relationships, and initiating change within the organization. This study provides continued support that this form of leadership is positively related to organizational characteristics. Specifically, this study shows that transformational leadership is positively related to academic optimism.

The Relationship between Transformational Leadership Practices and Academic Optimism

This study provided support for the hypothesis that the more transformational the principal is, the more academic optimism there will be within the school. Transformational Leadership is a form of principal leadership that moves individuals toward a level of commitment to achieve school goals by setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 2006). Furthermore, this study confirmed the second hypothesis, each category of transformational leadership, setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program, will be positively related to academic optimism.

Academic optimism is a measure of a general, school-wide confidence that students will be academically successful (Hoy et al., 2006). School leaders want to influence the teachers within their school. They desire teachers to believe not only that the mission of the school can be accomplished, but also that individual students can and will be successful in the school. This study has confirmed that particular leader behaviors and practices can have a positive impact on a teacher's belief that the school can and will be academically successful.

Considering that academic optimism is a relatively new construct, there has been very little research into possible explanations of schools scoring high in academic optimism, particularly that school leadership makes a difference. Hallinger and Heck (1998) concluded that there is very little quantitative evidence that the actions of principals make any difference in student achievement. This study has opened the door to inquiry into the connection to leadership behaviors which can have a positive impact on student achievement through academic optimism.

The need for the current study is founded in years of increased demand for schools to improve student achievement. Leithwood and his colleagues (1999, 2006) have provided a model

of school leadership, which has been proven to have a positive relationship with organizational characteristics (Leithwood et al., 2005). This study has shown that this model of leadership can indeed have an impact on academic optimism, which has been shown to be positively related to student achievement (Hoy et al., 2006).

Deal and Peterson (1999) asserted that transformational leadership has been shown to predict significantly a positive school culture consisting of norms, beliefs, and values. Ross and Gray (2004) have shown that this form of leadership raises the collective efficacy of a school. Teachers' belief that their actions can and will have a positive impact on their students is imperative to academic optimism. Transformational leadership behaviors that foster shared decision making are key components in building teachers' collective efficacy.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) determined that school trust was necessary for building a collaborative school culture and school improvement. Several studies have established a correlation between trust and student achievement (Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Leithwood and his colleagues (2006) assumed that a practice of working collaboratively builds trust. Podsakoff et al. (1990) asserted that transformational leadership practices build school trust. These practices include providing opportunities for parents and the community to feel welcomed into the school.

Principals who desire to be transformational will develop purposeful and meaningful relationships with the community. The principal will connect school clubs with community organizations that have similar goals. Faculty trust will be established through a school culture that brings all parties together to share in planning, accomplishing, and celebrating goals. Faculty trust in students and parents is essential to academic optimism.

A school's drive to succeed academically, academic emphasis, is the third crucial component to academic optimism. Academic emphasis is a comprehensive construct in which a school has set high achievable goals, there is a serious and orderly learning environment, and there is high student motivation for academic success (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). The academic focus of a school has been linked to student achievement when controlling for socioeconomic or minority status (Lee & Bryk, 1989; Hoy et al., 1990).

Leaders who desire to increase the academic optimisms of their school will choose to exercise this model of transformational leadership. The leader behaviors associated with each category of transformational leadership will be fundamental elements that will build collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis within the school.

Nanus (1992) defined vision as a practical and attainable direction for an organization. Goals are the stepping stones to accomplishing the vision of the organization. Transformational leaders will establish and create a clear vision for the school. The leader will establish realistic achievable goals that work toward meeting the school vision. The leader will set high performance expectations for all within the organization.

Leithwood and his colleagues (Leithwood et al., 1999) suggested that these can be accomplished through activities such as faculty retreats designed to engage the faculty in development of a shared vision for the school; frequently communicating to the faculty, students, parents, and community the vision, goals, and expectations via announcements, school banners, newspaper articles, webpage, etc.; and utilizing data from research in decision making and planning.

Transformational leaders will frequently refer to established vision, goals, and expectations in faculty meetings, memos, announcements, and acknowledgements. The school

vision, goals, and high expectations will be reinforced through the principal's commitment to not accepting second-rate performance from anyone. The principal will have a specific plan for addressing non-compliant performance through dialogue, memos, and documented reprimand. Teachers within the school will feel supported and that their efforts are not being undermined by colleagues who are not committed to the school.

The practices associated with this dimension of transformational leadership gives teachers a sense of purpose through collaboration in developing specific goals. Allowing teachers to share in development of goals will provide clarification of the meaning of the school vision in terms of practical implications for programs and instruction. When teachers are a part of the planning process they will begin to understand the correlation to school goals and the need for specific changes that need to be made within the school. Transformational leaders will establish an alignment of professional growth to school goals and an expectation that all staff will be hard-working, innovative, and professional in accomplishing the tasks at hand (Leithwood et al., 1999). These practices set the direction of the school.

Transformational leaders will be focused on developing the school staff. They will do this by giving faculty members individual support. This individual support will come by treating all colleagues as equals, being approachable and welcoming, encouraging new practices, providing coaching to staff members, getting to know staff members and recognizing strengths and weaknesses, and providing frequent recognition of hard work and accomplishments (Leithwood et al., 1999). Administrators will establish meaningful professional relationships with faculty members. Meaningful administrator/teacher relationships will foster a teacher's willingness to incorporate new ideas/strategies/technologies into the classroom. Through purposeful planned

discussions/dialogues/meetings the transformational principal will be able to provide a supportive atmosphere for teachers to try innovative practices.

Leaders will provide individuals with specific information on how to improve student performance through documented data. These data will come in the form of classroom observations, departmental discussions, and relevant assessment data. Transformational leaders will understand that each faculty member has different needs with regard to support and professional growth. The principal will be actively involved in planning for each teacher's professional development. A transformational principal will not just show a teacher's weakness, but rather assist the teacher in developing a prescriptive plan for improvement. The principal will then ensure that the teacher is provided with time, opportunity, and resources to grow professionally.

It is in this category that school leaders will foster the idea that teachers need to forgo self-interest for the overall good of the school. The transformational leader will provide opportunities for faculty members to be leaders within the school. Teachers will be encouraged to lead professional development, share best practices with colleagues, and participate in problem-solving meetings.

Transformational leaders will further develop staff members by providing intellectual stimulation. This is accomplished by removing any penalties for mistakes as part of an effort for improvement, challenging the status quo, encouraging new practices without pressure, and encouraging faculty members to share experiences with other faculty members (Leithwood et al., 1999). Collaborative experiences will be purposefully planned among the faculty members. Leaders exercising transformational behaviors will foster development and growth of staff members by modeling expected behaviors during faculty meetings, department meetings, and

other planning meetings. These sets of practices allow school leaders to develop the people around them.

Transformational leaders are aware of the importance of practices that directly influence the organization. These practices build the culture of the school, provide opportunities for participative-decision making, and establish positive parent/community relationships. Schein (1985) says that creating and managing the school culture is the only thing of significant importance that leaders do.

Transformational leaders influence the culture of the school through practices that reinforce norms of excellence for their work and the work of students, communicate the school's vision and goals, confront conflict openly and resolve it through shared-values, and forms a culture built on shared beliefs and values (Leithwood et al., 1999). Increased interactions with the faculty and staff will foster more understanding and desire to accomplish the school mission.

Transformational leaders reinforce the culture by fostering shared decision-making processes. Leaders build these processes by distributing leadership throughout the school, sharing decision-making power with staff, altering work conditions to allow faculty to have collaborative planning time, and giving faculty input and involvement into new initiatives (Leithwood et al., 1999). The transformational principal will provide opportunities for all faculty members to provide input through individual discussions, open dialogue within department/committee meetings, and collaborative discussions during faculty meetings.

An equally important component of the school is the relationship with the parents and community that the school serves. Transformational leaders work to build rapport with parents and the community. Leaders establish relationships by responding to the needs of the community, developing realistic expectations for direct involvement in school affairs, and

modifying attitudes (teacher and administrator) and approaches to teaching students in acknowledgement of students' family circumstances and the school's vision for those students (Leithwood et al., 1999). These elements are accomplished through frequent communication with stakeholders. Communicating with stakeholders comes through inviting them to open house, inviting them to participate on committees designated to solve problems, and providing a method of input into school operations (via email, webpage public forum, planning committees, etc.). Transformational leaders establish structures that are continually building the school culture, fostering shared decision making, and establishing positive parent/community relationships thereby redesigning the organization.

Transformational leaders are aware of the importance of managing the school. Effective management practices provide the foundation for a strong and stable organization.

Transformational leaders realize the importance of staffing. They provide instructional support, monitor school activities, and buffer the staff from external distractions.

Staffing is a critical element in managing the instructional program. New hires must align with the overall school mission. A transformational leader will be prepared to handle job openings. She/he will have a plan for the recruitment of effective new teachers. A transformational principal will establish relationships with colleges of education. The principal will invite professors of education programs to visit and participate in school activities. The principal will agree for his/her school to participate in educational research studies which will foster relative professional development for the school faculty. The establishment of these relationships will provide the principal with knowledge of outstanding new graduates.

The retention of effective teachers is also a vital component to staffing. Leaders will have regularly scheduled meetings with the faculty, department, and individual teachers to critically

examine school data and teacher needs essential to accomplishing the mission of the school. Open communication with faculty members, assisting in needs, and providing opportunities for professional growth are fundamental in retaining effective faculty members.

Frequent communication with teachers will allow administrators to stay abreast of issues affecting teachers and students. The transformational principal will maintain a list of teacher needs/desires that will enhance teacher instruction methods. She/he will then seek out ways to obtain the necessary materials and/or funds to meet those needs/desires.

An important issue in allowing teachers to do their job is protecting teachers from outside interruptions to their instruction. Transformational principals will safeguard a teacher's time from frivolous meetings and excessive student disciplinary issues (Leithwood et al., 2006). These management practices provide the leader with a core of support for initiatives geared toward school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006). Transformational leaders are effective at managing the instructional program.

In 2005, Leithwood and his colleagues cited a number of studies that have concluded that transformational leadership is an antecedent to many organizational constructs (school culture, teacher commitment, teacher job satisfaction, changed practices, planning and strategy for change, instructional quality, organizational learning, and teacher collective efficacy). It seems logical that school leadership practices that focus on setting the direction of the organization, developing the people of the organization, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program of the organization would foster a belief among the faculty and staff that they can and will make a difference in the academic achievement of the students they teach, academic optimism. This study confirms the belief that overall transformational leader behaviors build academic optimism. Furthermore this study confirms that if a school leader chooses to

focus on practices in any of the categories of transformational leadership he or she can enhance the academic optimism within the school.

School leaders want to know they make a difference. This study shows that school leaders can have a positive effect on student achievement by focusing on their leadership practices. A school leader would be well served to focus on setting the direction of the school, developing the people within the school, initiating necessary improvements, and managing the daily activities of the instructional program.

Transformational Leadership--Confirming a Construct

The third hypothesis of this study was to determine whether Leithwood's model of transformational leadership was stable based on his four categories. This researcher is unaware of any testing of Leithwood's model outside of Leithwood's own research. The results of factor analysis testing provided support that all categories do indeed load onto one factor. Therefore, in this sample, the construct of transformational leadership is stable.

In recent years transformational leadership has come under scrutiny and criticism (Gronn, 1995, 1996). The result has been a decreased focus on transformational practices. Leithwood's model is specific to school leadership. His model is comprehensive and offers specific sets of practice. The results of this study confirm that that Leithwood's model of transformational leadership is worthy of continued study by school leaders.

Specifically, this study has shown that this model of leadership can have a positive impact on a particular organizational characteristic such as academic optimism. This model of leadership could be used by state departments of education that are charged with going into schools that are failing. A specific plan of leadership could be written from Leithwood's model.

The facets of this model of leadership are easily transferrable from one school to another. This model of leadership could be taught to school administrators who are struggling or are overwhelmed by the need for school improvement. The results of this study are significant in the fact that a school leader could examine the components of transformational leadership and choose to focus on only one or more of those components and see a positive influence on the academic optimism within the school.

Findings not Hypothesized

When SES is not accounted for in a multiple linear regression of all of the elements of transformational leadership simultaneously, none of the categories of transformational leadership are more significant than the others in influencing academic optimism. The addition of SES to the regression shows that managing the instructional program is significant to academic optimism.

The results support that no matter what the SES status of a school, leaders who focus on fostering the dimensions of managing the instructional program will enhance the academic optimism of the school. It seems reasonable that these sets of practices give the leader credibility with the teachers. Survey items (14-20) from the School Leadership instrument, measuring the management aspect of leadership, examine how the leader directly interacts with the teacher and their classroom. These results seem to support that a strong and stable infrastructure of school leadership is central to academic optimism.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) found that the management aspect of school leadership produced positive results in relation to student outcomes. Managing the instructional program is a set of practices which create a strong and stable infrastructure. These practices are essential to

setting the stage for school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006). School leaders must hire staff that aligns with the vision and goals of the school, they must support that staff, they must provide oversight to the activities of the school, and they must protect teachers from external nuisances which may detract from the mission of the school.

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings from this study provide support for further research into the relationship of transformational leadership and academic optimism. The purpose of this study was to begin the inquiry into the relationship of Leithwood's (1999) model of transformational leadership and academic optimism. The positive results from this study of elementary schools provide a basis for continued study on secondary schools. The difference could be the unit of analysis.

Elementary schools are more centralized and less complex than secondary schools (Herriott & Firestone, 1984). In large high schools, the transformational leader may actually be the department chair rather than the principal. The more transformational the department chair the more optimistic the department.

This study has continued a line of inquiry into the relationship of transformational leadership and organizational constructs. A finding of particular interest was the significance of managing the instructional program to predicting academic optimism when controlling for SES. Why is managing the instructional program a stronger predictor of academic optimism when examined with SES? What are the behaviors in managing the instructional program that build a teacher's collective efficacy, faculty trust in clients, and academic emphasis? Why do these behaviors overcome the effects of SES?

Hallinger's (2003) review of instructional and transformational leadership found that management practices designed to provide close monitoring and supervision of the classroom had little effect on students. However, the results of this study provide support for Leithwood and his colleagues' (2006) claim that these practices are an important component of leadership. It could be that these sets of practice overcome the effects of SES because these practices provide stability within the school through effective staffing techniques. Furthermore, these practices establish a strong infrastructure by providing teachers with adequate instructional support and protection from outside influences. Therefore, the more a leader manages the instructional program the more optimistic the staff will become.

Conclusion and Final Summary

Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006) suggested that future research into academic optimism should explore the role of the principal in fostering a school culture of academic optimism. This research project has begun the inquiry into the relationship of leadership and academic optimism. The results of this research determined that there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and academic optimism.

This study provides support to school leaders who are struggling to initiate change or improvement in their schools. Leithwood's model provides leaders with a plan for implementing school improvement programs. School leaders must recognize and build a positive school culture through practices that communicate the school vision, reinforce school norms of excellence, establish a collaborative decision-making structure, use slogans and motivational phrases frequently, and shares power and responsibility with others.

Sharing power and responsibility means shared decision making. School leaders will value staff opinion, allow for group problem solving, establish collaborative planning, and create opportunities for staff development. Participative decision making empowers teachers and leads to a belief in their abilities to make a difference in the classroom and the school as a whole (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The goal of all educators should be to make a difference in the lives of their students. All educators should desire to see academic growth in all of their students. This study has provided support for the idea that school leadership can foster the belief among teachers that we can make a difference and our students can be academically successful.

The significance of this study is founded in the fact that it provides school leaders with a realistic set of practices which foster academic optimism within the school. The study is even more significant when taken into account that each category of transformational leadership was shown to be positively related to academic optimism. There may be some components of Leithwood's model of transformational leadership that a school leader may not be ready to implement. This study supports the notion that if a school leader will choose to focus on any of the categories of practice he or she will see improvement in the academic optimism of the school. Therefore, the increase in academic optimism should result in improved student achievement.

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