PRIVATE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL

CULTURE AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

Sam Houston State University

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

_____

by

Jonathan P. Strecker

August, 2016

PRIVATE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATIONAL

CULTURE AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

by

Jonathan P. Strecker

_____

APPROVED:

Dr. George W. Moore
Dissertation Director

Dr. Cynthia Martinez-Garcia
Committee Member

Dr. Andrea Foster
Committee Member

Dr. Stacey L. Edmonson, Dean
College of Education

DEDICATION

The road to meaningful success is a road long endured. Since my early struggles in education, I often felt unsuccessful and inadequate. Since those times, I have learned that individuals along the way can bolster one's perseverance and spirit to achieve possibilities considered unattainable. This dissertation represents the culmination of the help and support I have received on this path. First, to my intelligent, supportive, and beloved wife. Stacey has been the bedrock in which these possibilities were forged. Since our early days at The Ohio State University to the culmination of my doctoral degree, she has always been and forever will be the most influential person in my life. To my son, Joshua, who has inspired me with his infectious positive attitude and willingness to encourage me while striving to realize this dream. Finally, to Mr. Lieber, Mr. Kiss, and Dr. Moore, three teachers on my journey who could encourage and inspire me to reach beyond my perceived limitations.

ABSTRACT

Strecker, Jonathan P., *Private middle school principal perceptions on educational culture and student development*. Doctor of Education (Education), August, 2016, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how private middle school principals perceive and experience educational culture and student development. An in-depth study of private middle school principals' perceptions and experiences on the characteristics essential to cultivating a successful educational environment and fostering individual student development was explored.

Methodology

Using a phenomenological design by Moustakas', private middle school principal participants were selected for individual personal interviews. Data were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, clustered, and synthesized. Themes were identified and recorded.

Findings

Ten themes emerged from the responses to the two research questions. Regarding Research Question 1: What are private middle school principals' perceptions on educational culture and individual student development; the following six themes emerged: (a) *mission driven approach*, (b) *core developments*, (c) *depth of development*, (d) *active, intentional learning*, (e) *diverse environment*, and (f) *constituency groups* Regarding Research Question 2: What are the experiences of private middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual student development; the following four themes emerged: (a) *traditional methodologies*, (b) *lack of teacher knowledge*, (c) *lack of diversity in community*, and (d) *schedule constraints*.

The underlying characteristics regarding educational culture and student development were a school mission, individual student attributes, levels of learning, student engagement, environmental factors, and constituency groups. The reflections and writings of John Dewey, including the importance of intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development provided for an individual student attribute framework. Dewey's basic factors of development are further enhanced when intentionally cultivated using Bloom's Taxonomy of learning. Bloom's levels of learning are successfully cultivated in classrooms that focus on active engagement. Diversity in an environment fosters a sense of school connectedness for a school's constituency groups. In this dissertation study, I conclude a strong mission driven approach, based on a Deweyan framework, cultivated through Bloom's taxonomy, in an actively-engaged diverse classrooms, supported by teachers, students, and parents, will enhance a school's ability to foster student development and promote a successful educational environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I find it amazing that so much of who we become is influenced by those around us, yet at the same time it is only our persistent effort to persevere which determines our eventual outcome. As I sit in my study, surrounded by the works of some incredible minds, such as Einstein, Jefferson, Lincoln, Sun Tzu, Gladwell, Goleman, Covey, and others, does it remind me that success first begins with standing on the shoulders of giants. These great minds have allowed me to become a better person, husband, father, and educator, and for that I am eternally grateful.

These last three years has allowed me to not only consider how children can find success, but reach out to colleagues to confirm or alter my own preconceptions about what ultimately are the factors of success. I would like to thank all the faculty at The Sam Houston State University, my incredible Cohort 30, and the participants in my survey. There insights provided for a possible framework of educational excellence.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Mike Maher, Head of School and the middle school faculty at The John Cooper School. There constant support and inspirations was greatly appreciated. I have garnered much from Mr. Maher's leadership and mentoring, and the dedication and excellence of the faculty.

Countless revisions and sage advice by Dr. George Moore, my dissertation chair, proved essential in the creation of this document. Thank you for your intellectual advice, quick communication, emotional spirit, while giving so much of your time. Your oversight helped me produce a work that which will prove to be an essential building block in my future endeavors. To my dissertation committee, Dr. Foster and Dr. Martinez-Garcia, your kind remarks, questions, and ideas in class provided much needed

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Since the advent of a formal education system in the mid-1800s, education was seen as a major component of achieving the American Dream (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). Although voluntary at first, American education became compulsory by 1918, but was only starting to become formalized (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). The effect of the Civil War drastically changed how the government functioned as the requirements of southern reconstruction were established; the necessity for a more centralized government was required (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Economic changes were also prominent during this era (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Furthermore, the educational system in the United States, during this period, was heavily influenced by the necessities of reconstruction and the industrial revolution, and resulted in a linear model of standardizing education (Robinson, 2011). Urbanization brought on by industrialization was also a major component of this time period (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). Robinson (2011) identified urbanization, mechanistic processes, and stronger government as components that caused the United States to setup a system based on the idea, all children should learn the same things, at the same time, potentially limiting the effectiveness of schools.

Education has been reformed over time, yet the overall philosophy has remained the same—to ensure standardized proficiency in education (Robinson, 2011). English, mathematics, science, history, and world languages are frequently tested as part of this process. These intellectual endeavors are the framework for modern educational accountability system and perceived success according to the National Association for

College Admission Counseling (NACAC, 2009). The NACAC rank accountability testing, SAT and ACT exams, and academic GPAs as the primary components considered by colleges to determine who continues education. As a function of these current accountability standards and criteria identified by the NACAC, educators would benefit from thoroughly understanding the complexity of intellectual development and the influence of multiple factors that enhance intellectual development as recognized by Dewey over a century ago (1897).

John Dewey, an early pioneer in educational ideals and social reform had written a series of books and articles on the topic of educational development (Dewey, 1895; Dewey, 1897; Dewey, 1902; Dewey, 1909; Dewey, 1916). Dewey's insights into the complexity of academic success were highlighted when examining the relationship between intellectual development and emotional, social, and ethical factors in his book, *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902). Dewey posited social, emotional, and ethical development should be held in equal regard when considering the entire educational process, rather than solely the consideration of intellectual development. Dewey (1895, 1897; 1902; 1909, 1916) also identified the growth of a child as more than intellectual endeavors, and education should be regarded as a general philosophy and guide rather than a controlling agent.

In developing a complete framework for individual development in an adaptive school culture, researchers have worked hard to define these principles. Popp (2015) agreed with Dewey's philosophy of education (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916), a democratic society provided for an optimal atmosphere of growth. Popp (2015) also suggested Dewey himself rejected his early democratic philosophy of education as incomplete and

continued to adapt his philosophy over time. As Dewey (1902; 1909; 1916) refined his educational philosophy, he frequently referenced social influence, emotional impact, moral and ethical dilemmas, and physical health as part of the educational process (Popp, 2015). Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916) highlighted the necessity of understanding intellectual, social, emotional, ethical and physical development from both a cultural and individual perspective. Dewey's educational framework could potentially ground schools in a fundamental mission and philosophy that might enhance intellectual development.

Statement of the Problem

Understanding these five developmental areas, outlined by Dewey, provides for a possible framework for educational development. Friedman and Friedman (1980) suggested parents of today are frustrated by the fact, schools are not meeting basic intellectual standards; additional concerns expressed by parents included lack social harmony, emotional well-being, ethical standards, and physical safety. Parent frustration has tarnished the perception of the American education system and the failure of education in reference to the diversification by ability, ethnicity, gender, race, and socioeconomic class (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). Is it possible the events in America during the 1800s shaped educational practices today? Friedman and Friedman suggested a decentralized system of governmental education control, but shortly after their book, *Free to choose* (1980), *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) was also released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. In some ways, the ideals of *A Nation at Risk* were needed, but the implications have failed to produce any far-reaching effects to date (Graham, 2013).

Part of the reason for lack of effectiveness might be better understood when referring to the *Sandia Report.* An in-depth analysis and assessment was done in 1993 by Carson, Huelskamp, and Woodall. The report focused on international assessments, SAT performance, and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). Although the trends were confirmed correct, the analysis of the trends was mischaracterized and flawed in interpretation. In the article, *The Sandia Report and U.S. Achievement: An Assessment* (Stedman, 1994), the author highlighted the national outcry for reform that stemmed from *A Nation at Risk.* Stedman (1994) proposed the *Sandia Report* might have been suppressed due to the inherent conflict with presidential policy and reform, given the document was completed in 1991, but not released until 1993. Stedman (1994) agreed that the Sandia report confirmed the well-intentioned nature of the presidential agenda but argued the reform did not properly address the actual issues. Stedman concluded the report, that was used to document the trends for the last two decades, had shown relatively steady performance in mathematics and science, and the United States was still the leader in producing college graduates. Yet, Stedman (1994) recognized the disparity of achievement in ethnic and racial groups and suggested further support in these areas.

The points articulated by Friedman and Friedman (1980) and Stedman (1994), are closely related to the social identifiers specified by The National Association of Independent Schools Association (NAIS). Discrimination and inequality, based on the *Big Eight* social identifiers (i.e. Ability, Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Race, Religion/Spirituality, Sexual Orientation, and Socioeconomic Status) may be an underlying influence hindering the ability of children to succeed in school, both private and public (Independent School Diversity Network, 2002). If children are expected to

develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, ethically, and physically, as Dewey

suggested (1897; 1902; 1909; 1916), then it is important to understand the impact

discrimination and inequality have on intellectual development, social connectedness,

emotional well-being, ethical understanding, and physical health.

In private institutions, the highly selective nature of the admissions process can

unintentionally create homogenous populations (Ohikuare, 2013). As a result, student

struggles are a real issue for private school educators as minority students can feel

socially disconnected, anxious, ethically constrained, and physically inept (Ohikuare,

2013). These factors can potentially lead to a child struggling academically and feeling

unwelcome in private schools. As a result of a selective process, private schools can

have homogeneous population groupings, such as equal ability groupings, similar

ethnicities, religious affiliations, and socioeconomic factors that result from not

intentionally seeking out diversity (Ohikuare, 2013). These selective factors might lead

to higher student intellectual success, but may limit a student's social, emotional, ethical,

and physical adaptability.

In 2014, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conducted a

study on the state of diversity practices among independent schools (Torres, 2015). The

goal of this study included analyzing roles of diversity practitioners, diversity

implementation, and review demographic characteristics. The authors of the survey

highlighted less than 50% of diversity practitioners were in fulltime positions, usually

balancing the diversity role with teaching responsibilities and many of the responsibilities

were imprecisely defined. The authors also concluded that only 45% of the schools had a

formal strategic plan. Torres (2015) suggested the importance of diversity work in

schools, the workplace, and society and posited every effort should be made to enhance the resources for diversity practitioners. As outlined in the study, intentional efforts are being made by independent schools, but much work is to be done (Torres, 2015).

The National Association of Independent Schools, the governing body for many independent and parochial schools around the country have recently prioritized the importance of diversity and inclusion, potentially recognizing the benefit of diverse population factors (NAIS Website, 2013). This realization is highlighted by the development of conferences for both students, Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC), and adults, the People of Color Conference (POCC). The development of diversity statements for individual member schools has also been prioritized in recent years by NAIS. A recent focus on diversity was also reinforced by the statement on the NAIS website (2013), "We encourage member schools to look closely at their mission or diversity statements and the ways they are worded as they work to become more inclusive school communities" (Mission and Diversity Statements Section, para. 1)

Although private school educators continue to struggle to become more diverse and put programs in place to ensure the equitable treatment for all students in an inclusive environment, public educators have also recognized the importance of inclusion (Lunenburg, 2013). Private schools, in accordance with NAIS initiatives, are working to address the disparity between minority students and White students. Politicians in many ways were addressing the issue in public education well in advance of private schools by developing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001). The NCLB was to ensure all students achieved a basic level of proficiency in mathematics and language arts skills, regardless of circumstance or disability. The intention of the NCLB Act may have served

the same function as recent efforts made by NAIS to bring to fruition the benefits of diversity. Private schools, although not governed by the NCLB, face similar issues and should continue to focus on the reason for the disparity (Torres, 2015).

The evolution of education in the United States, specifically within public junior high and middle schools, has resulted in a system struggling to meet the needs of young adolescents (Lunenburg, 2013). The NCLB was initiated for all the right reasons in 2001, attempting to secure equality and success for all. In the 2002 reference guide, *No Child Left Behind: A Desktop Reference*, (Prepared by the Office of the Under Secretary, 2002), was considered landmark reform hoping to change academic achievement and culture in American schools. President Bush (2001) stated, "These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America" (Executive Summary, para. 1).

Lunenburg (2013) supported President Bush's reasoning by reiterating the need to equalize the system, stating NCLB was lauded by civil rights activists as a strategy to close the achievement gap between minority and White students, but also suggested the potential flaws of NCLB. Although this initiative was just and praiseworthy, the measure has failed to meet expectations (Lunenburg, 2013). Also, people considered the 2001 NCLB Act to have limited economic backing, thus limiting the NCLB Act's success (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Given the perceived limitations of the NCLB Act, in 2009 President Obama infused the system with a $91 billion in spending under the *State Fiscal Stabilization Fund* and the *Race to the Top* initiative (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). *Race to the Top*

has four major areas of focus: (a) increasing teacher effectiveness (merit pay), (b) collecting and utilizing student and classroom level data, (c) turning around poorly performing schools, and (d) improving academic standards and student and teacher assessments. Funds were provided through the initiative to some of the neediest and most under funded programs including, special education, Head Start, and education for the homeless. However, these recent endeavors by the federal government, while vested, cannot be the sole contributor in developing educational philosophy and oversight (Lunenburg, 2013). According to Rapp, Sloan, and Hostrup (2006), the NCLB Act has caused an overabundance of high stake testing and loss of curricular control. This loss of control may very well be what Dewey (1916) warned against when he highlighted the importance of freedom and democracy within our societies and schools. Rapp et al. (2006) stated the ramifications of the NCLB Act caused some individuals to boycott testing, teachers to organize, and researchers to focus on the constraints caused by the NCLB program. In essence, schools have been forced to promote quantity versus quality, while sacrificing the social, emotional, ethical, and physical development of children, that has been shown to be correlated with academic success (Juvonen 2006; Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012; Zullig, Huebner, & Patton 2011).

Since 2001, a significant amount of state capital has been expended to ensure achievement gaps among low performing groups (e.g., minorities, English language learners, students with special learning needs) were improved; yet, this gap still exists (Lunenburg, 2013). One way to measure the current status is to consider the percent of Black and Hispanic students requiring remediation when entering college. In a report on remediation, the Complete College America (CCA, 2012) estimated that students who

enroll in 2-year colleges, over 50% of those minority students took remedial classes, with a higher percentage of Black students (67.7%) and Hispanic students (58.3%), with only 22.3% of those students completing remediation. Once a student was placed into remedial classes in college, the more difficult it became for the student to graduate. Of those students placed into remedial classes at 2-year colleges, only 9.5% graduated within three years (CCA, 2012). In the same report on remediation, the Complete College America (CCA, 2012) estimated of those students who enrolled in 4-year colleges, 19.9% of those students took remedial classes that consisted of higher percentages of Black students (39.1%) and Hispanic students (20.6%). When considering students of low income entering a 2-year college, 64.7% of those students require remediation and for students entering a 4-year college, 31.9% of those students required remediation. The authors of the study (CCA, 2012) point out the deficiencies of remedial classes and emphasized if a student was not prepared entering college, the likelihood of a student completing college was greatly reduced.

Rapp et al. (2006) suggested the NCLB Act has influenced educational leaders to increase the number of tests taken in more subjects, across more grades. Rapp et al. (2006) further suggested the accountability standards have cultivated an atmosphere of oppressive school polices and have caused educational leaders to become myopic in their approach to achieving success. As a result, educators and students are beginning to employee counter-measures to express their disdain of current policies, including test boycotting, letters to schools and government agencies, and website protests (Rapp et al., 2006)

Samuels (2007) reported most superintendents have favorable impressions of themselves, but many feel the NCLB Act has had a negative impact on the educational environment. Samuel (2007) highlighted some of the constraints on the educational environment caused by policies and mandates created by the NCLB Act, outlined by the District's Chiefs views of changes most needed. These changes include, considering the growth of a child from year-to-year, more funding, measuring in alternative ways, and eliminating sanctions placed on schools. The lack of autonomy and control, according to Samuel (2007) has caused increased stress among superintendents. In their qualitative meta-analysis, Brown and Lan (2015) contended, since the implementation of the NCLB Act, teachers have focused more on academic skills in recent years than in the past, including those teachers in prekindergarten and kindergarten. However, the focus on academic interests alone has caused teachers to forego teaching life skills such as autonomy, social skills, and emotional capacity.

School expectations are critical to success. Lunenburg (2013) highlighted in his research the purpose of the NCLB Act was to establish high quality education for all students, especially for those attending low performing schools. Yet, despite the NCLB Acts purpose, the implementation of the act may be causing more harm than good (Lunenburg, 2013). Turnipseed and Darling-Hammond (2011) declared the intentional focus on multiple-choice standardized testing has caused higher-order thinking skills to be sacrificed for the ultimate purpose of accountability. Turnipseed and Darling-Hammond (2011) suggested creative and critical thinking skills should be prioritized to create a more adaptive student given that 65% of the jobs of tomorrow have yet to be invented according to the Department of Labor when addressing future jobs of the 21st

Century (1999). The NCLB Act has prioritized the understanding of content (Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2011), yet according to global business leaders (2010 IBM Survey), the qualities of creative and critical thinking, social competence, resilience and "grit," and resourcefulness need to be prioritized. Similar to the philosophy of Dewey, a more holistic development might be suggested (Popp, 2015).

Many researchers (Brown & Lan, 2015; Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2011; Lunenburg, 2013; Samuels, 2007) have identified the constraints caused by the NCLB Act, yet they recognized the NCLB Act has yielded little success. In conjunction with the reality of the NCLB failures and the every growing literature on effective human development by Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916), and others (Juvonen, 2006; Niehaus et al., 2012; Zullig et al., 2011), schools should focus on alternative methods.

The current educational structure outlined by private school homogenous practices and the NCLB Act (2001) may have limited the holistic framework outlined by Dewey and the structure suggested by Friedman and Friedman (1980) for positive school development. As public and private schools continue trying to identify ways to be more inclusive and promote educational effectiveness, administrators should focus on mission, philosophy, and practical goals that will allow for all schools to achieve academic success (Brown & Lan, 2015). The tenets of Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916) might provide an outline for the necessary structure and process to guide our thinking. Many researchers highlight areas of focus and infer it will be those administrators who prioritize positive school culture and individual student development that prove to be most effective in developing students intellectually (Fryenberg, Care, Freeman, & Chan, 2009; Niehaus et al., 2012; Zullig, et al., 2011). Educational effectiveness will also include those

administrators, who not only require intellectual development to be promoted in the classroom, but those administrators who prioritize social, emotional, ethical, and physical programs as an everyday occurrence (Ashley, Ennis, & Owusu-Ansah, 2012; Loukas, Ripper-Suhler, & Horton, 2009; & Vidourek, King, Bernard, Murnan, & Nabors, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into Private Middle School Principal perceptions and experiences on educational culture and individual student development. Educational Culture included school connectedness and inclusive social practices based on the *Big Eight* social identifiers outlined by the Independent School Diversity Network (ISDN). Individual student development included intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development. Public school information was used in the literature review based on the significant research contribution with regard to school culture, inclusive practices and structures, and individual student development. Understanding the issues facing public education may benefit private middle school principals due to the limited degree of diversity in private school populations. Public school structures and articles were used to help bridge the gap, although public school principals were not being interviewed directly. The common components of school missions, philosophies, and ethos of private and public schools might allow for some commonalities and understanding. By conducting this research, I hoped to more completely understand the impact of educational culture and individual student development on intellectual success. The scope of the study was limited to private schools, given the qualitative nature of the study. I would hope this study could be replicated for public schools, and then the results compared for analysis.

Research Questions

To gain and understanding of the private middle school principals' experience and perceptions, a qualitative study was completed. The following research questions were used to guide the study: (a) What are private middle school principals' perceptions on educational culture and individual student development; and (b) What are the experiences of private middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual student development?

Significance of Study

This study is significant because both private and public educational leaders who foster mission, philosophy, and culture might consider the social, emotional, ethical, and physical factors and their relationship to intellectual success. In private schools, where some students struggle academically, especially when considering the *Big Eight* diversity factors and schools' continued promotion of intellectual time on task initiatives, the results of this study may be used to reconsider current practices and to help guide future programs. The insights identified in this study might adjust current thinking among school leaders to consider the premise, promoting intellectual success is multifaceted, and possibly more in line with Dewey's philosophy of a development. Further, from this study, school leaders may be better guided to develop programs, leading to a positive, inclusive school culture and individual student success (Lunenburg, 2013; Popp, 2015; Turnipseed & Darling-Hammond, 2011).

Until recently, private schools have remained successful using selective, homogenous practices to accept students. These practices ensured the schools would have equal ability groupings, and a potential by-product of this selection process has

limited diversity (i.e., race, ethnicity, socio-economic status). Private schools have recently prioritized inclusive practices; however, these schools are also in their infancy of understanding how diversity can potentially affect culture and individual student achievement. It may be important for private schools to prioritize understanding and equity as private schools increase diversity.

In the article, *What Americans keep ignoring about Finland's schools success* that has been identified as producing a highly successful education environment, Partanen (2011) reported much of the success is attributed to the focus on equity over accountability. Finland's school system and overall culture prioritize school culture, emotional well-being, and physical health (Partanen, 2011). Many researchers point to Finland's homogeneous environment, but Partanen (2011) posited diversity has been increasing over the past decade with no degradation in educational effectiveness.

In addition, this study may benefit private school leadership in establishing a core mission, philosophy, and vision on how to get all students to develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, ethically, and physically. Student development may be equally important in creating a culture of students who are knowledgeable and wise, articulate, empathetic and rational, honest and trustworthy, and healthy. Private schools, not constrained by the NCLB Act, have a unique opportunity to structure programs based on the work by Dewey (1916), Friedman and Friedman, (1980), Goleman (1996 & 2006), and Gladwell (2000).

Finally, my study was timely given the recent endeavors to increase diversity in private schools. Given many factors of consideration are subjective and correlational in nature, I choose a qualitative approach to gain a deeper perspective on educational culture

and practices. The perceptions from private school principals provided both a rich

collection of detail and a level of importance, based on the number of times particular

topics were mentioned during the interview. Hopefully, my study highlighted the

importance of Dewey's framework on individual student development, and the level of

depth required on each factor of development.   Also, I hope the study highlighted the

importance of inclusivity on educational culture that might lead to all students, not only

getting equal opportunity, but being able to take advantage of the opportunity.

Conceptual Framework

   The conceptual framework was based on the general principals of human

development, outlined by the tenets of Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916). Dewey

postulated that social, emotional, ethical, and physical development should be held with

equal regard when considering the development of a child intellectually. The five

developments, intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development were the

five overarching themes considered. These themes were analyzed using a revised

Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson et al. 2001). Given the recent disparity of achievement

among particular groups or individuals, highlighted by recent programs, endeavors, and

acts, the literature review considered possible cultural or societal ramifications for lack of

achievement (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Bøe et al., 2014; Daly, Shin, Thakral, Selders, and

Vera, 2008; Diemert, 1992; Martens et al., 2014; Osterman, 2000; Rose, Joe, Shields, &

Caldwell, 2014; Rudasill, Niehaus, Crockett, & Rakes, 2014).

Definition of Terms

   "Big Eight" social identifiers. Taken from the Independent School Diversity

Network– "strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion in independent schools by

providing family support and programing, resources, and opportunities for communication and collaboration between school communities" (para. 1)   Social Identifiers – (i.e., Ability, Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Socio-Economic Class)

Complexity Theory. Refers to the study of phenomena, like school culture and the human brain and is studied by considering the interactions of objects or people (Johnson, 2007).

Emotional development. Combination of emotional intelligence and emotional learning (Goleman, 1996). Emotional development revolves around the idea of motivation, persistence, delayed gratification, stability, resiliency, and empathy.

Ethical development. Combination of ethical intelligence and ethical learning (Weinstein, 2011). Ethical intelligence revolves around the idea of do not harm, make things better, respect others, be fair, and loving.

Harkness Method. The Harkness approach is a student-centered, discussion-based philosophical methodology to teaching and learning. Shared ideas, thinking critically and creatively, and developing the ability to articulate voice collectively represents the qualities emphasized by the Harkness method (Boadi, 2015).

Intellectual development. Described by Piaget and Inhelder (1969) as the acquisition of new knowledge causing qualitative changes through a series of stages of development.

Middle school. Middle schools in the United States can vary by institution. In my study, middle schools are private schools covering Grades 6 to 8, including both secular and religious private schools.

Physical development. Combination of physical intelligence and physical learning (Lobel, 2014). Physical intelligence revolves around body development, health, and fitness, including the honing of your five senses.

Social development. Combination of social intelligence and social learning (Goleman, 2006). Social development revolves around the idea of connection, collaboration, and communication in regards to human relationships.

Delimitations

My study was delimited to five private middle school principals in southeast, Texas. Participants for this study were principals who meet the following three criteria: (a) schools were be a member of the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS), (b) had the title, Head of Middle School or principal, and (c) had a formal mission statement. Therefore, the individual interview protocols contained questions related to the middle school culture, including inclusive practices, and middle school student development with no participation from charter school or public school principals. Because the interviews were scheduled and completed during the winter of 2016, data collected might be affected by the attitudes of the principals at this time of the year, compared to if they were collected at other times of the school year.

Limitations

Limitations are "potential weakness or problems with the study identified by the researcher" (Creswell, 2005, p. 198). A limitation of my study is the degree to which the findings can be transferable to other settings given the small number of interviews. In phenomenological, qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the findings is limited, because of researcher bias (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This bias may cause the

researcher to seek out themes they want to find (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). My role as a private middle school principal might be affected by researcher bias. Although the findings in my study were not be fully generalizable, they may be transferable to private and public principals in regards to education development, such as the mission, philosophy, and ethos of school environments. A potential bias is the generalized transferability between geographically diverse private schools, private and public schools, and divisional differences (e.g. Elementary/Lower, Intermediate, Junior High/Middle School, and High School/Upper School).

Assumptions

Several assumptions were made in my study. First, I assumed the private school principals are all from high achieving academic institutions. These schools are recognized by ISAS as schools having met the full accreditation requirements necessary for membership. Second, I assumed the principals were able to articulate the culture and individual programs currently exhibited in the school. These principals come highly recommended as competent Heads of Middle School. In an effort to best ensure leadership competency, the principal had a minimum of three years of experience as an administrator.

Third, I assume the principals' responses during the individual interviews were not changed because others are aware of their participation in the research (i.e., reactivity of the participants) [Onwuegbuzie, 2003]. Additionally, I am assumed the principals were truthful to all questions without feeling pressure to answer a question to fit the needs of the study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II focused on a review of literature of the following themes: (a) the role of the principal; (b) educational culture; (c) school culture complexity; (d) educational inequality and social identifier correlations; (e) social identifiers and social, emotional, ethical, and physical correlations; and (f) social, emotional, ethical, and physical correlations and educational effects. Chapter III focused on the methods in the study, including research questions, research design, role of researcher, selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, confirmability, ethical considerations, and a summary. Chapter IV focused on the findings derived from the individual interviews, based on coding. Chapter V summarized the findings in comparison to the review of literature, conclusions based on those comparisons, discussion of the potential meaning, resulting in a possible framework, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

American Schools are at risk of failure (Ravitch, 2013). Despite the efforts of both Republicans and Democrats, the public education accountability system is broken and needs to be revised (Ravitch, 2013). Ravitch (2013) identified the harsh realities of public schools and the current educational condition. Much like Dewey, Ravitch highlighted the underlying components of educational necessity, that include the importance of social, emotional, ethical, and physical development to ensure intellectual success. Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909; 1916) early on and Ravitch (2013) recently, addressed the heightened concern in public education, yet it is important to realize private schools also have a degree of social, emotional, ethical, and physical constraints that may be a correlated factor to private school educational success or failure. Private and public education, although different in many ways, have the same responsibility of effectively educating children. The oversight of this reality, only heightens the importance of the principal.

The purpose of the review of literature for this study reviewed (a) the role of the principal (b) educational culture, (c) school culture complexity; (d) educational inequality and social identifier correlations; (e) social identifiers and social, emotional, ethical, and physical correlations, and (f) social, emotional, ethical, and physical correlations and educational effects. I reviewed the literature for potential themes that have historically restricted a child's ability to be successful, and potential relationships between academic success and non-academic factors. Given the number of themes in my study, I tried to use large scale studies, including meta-analyses.

In preparation for the literature review, multiple sources were referred to and referenced, including books, articles, and videos. Books were used from multiple genres, such as educational reference, historical perspectives, psychology, sociology, philosophy, health, and research guidelines. Articles were the primary source for research. I used Sam Houston State University Online Newton Gresham Library's Engine Orange. EbscoHost database was the primary source for articles in my study. The following search criteria was used; *role of principal*, *educational culture*, *complexity theory*, *chaos theory, educational inequity, race, gender, socio-economic status, oppression, intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development*. Combinations of the listed words were used to highlight particular points.

The Role of Principal

The role of the principal becomes more complex as administrative practices become more varied (Bayler, 2014). Bayler (2014) highlighted the importance of team building, communication, and problem solving as part of the needed transformational leadership skills required in today's complex world. The history of leadership has changed in schools, dating back to the 1950s (Bayler, 2014). Since that time, schools asked principals to be legal leaders in the 1950s, human resource managers in the 1970s, managers, change initiators, and instructional strategists in the 1980s (Bayler, 2014). In conclusion, Bayler (2014) obtained statements from principals that had become over burdened with paperwork and phone calls as a result of these multi-faceted roles. As a result, according to Bayler (2014), principals have little time to focus on upper level leadership techniques. Another complaint issued by principals included the lack of authority or expertise to conduct professional development opportunities (Bayler, 2014).

As a result of these two short comes, school leadership should find a way to cut back on the logistic responsibilities limiting principals from developing the core values of the school, including teacher development (Bayler, 2014).

In 2012, the Council of Great City Schools conducted a study on the hiring, mentoring, and evaluation of school principals (Corcoran et al., 2013). The study was conducted in two parts, the first was done by surveying school principals. The second involved visits to promote professional development on leadership and support mechanisms (Corcoran et al., 2013). Recommendations were provided for building effective principal development and supervisory systems (Corcoran et al., 2013). The recommendations included, clearly defined core competencies, narrowing the principals' responsibilities, match skills of principals with school needs, increasing professional development, networking to improve collaboration among principals, mentoring, accountability standards, meaningful evaluation for principals, and a commitment to resources (Corcoran et al., 2013). Corcoran et al. (2013) stipulated that leadership has changed from site management to transformational leadership.

Research has highlighted the importance of the intellectual responsibilities of principal, but given the necessity for transformational leadership, the principal's role has become more complex and challenging (Bayler, 2014; Corcoran et al, 2013). As transformational principals are asked to become involved in school climate development, collaboration, and relationship development, as a way to increase academic development, the role of the principal in conjunction with the counselor is essential (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). Intentional efforts to increase supportive and safe environments is essential in cultivating the atmosphere necessary for academic growth (Cisler & Bruce, 2013).

The role of the school counselor is often misunderstood or misrepresented (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). To develop an environment that cultivates the academic, social, emotional, ethical, and physical needs of children, the role of the counselor must be clear from the perspective of the principal (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). In conclusion, Cisler and Bruce (2013) recognized that school accountability will continue, yet the principals should seek to understand the complex dynamics of social, emotional, and ethical understanding, provided by the school counselor. The role of the counselor is a valuable resource that will improve overall academic performance (Cisler & Bruce, 2013).

Educational Culture

Student development happens within a wide variety of cultures. Dewey, along with his focus on individual development and culture, also focused on the importance of a free or democratic atmosphere (Dewey, 1916). For a society or culture to achieve optimal growth, a level of discourse and freedom must be maintained (Dewey, 1916). This freedom, according to Dewey, would help develop an adaptive system of culture in an educational context.

Dewey's body of work, highlighting intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical growth from an individual and cultural perspective would provide schools with a framework to help develop student programs and establish school cultures, within a democratic society. Dewey's premise has been reinforced by many contemporary researchers and authors, as well (Achor, 2010; Gladwell, 2008; Goleman, 2006; Robinson, 2011). Although individual development and school culture may be seen as a system far too complex to fully comprehend, a relatively new field of science has emerged that might help explain the concept of complex systems such as economics,

particle dynamics, brain development, and societal structures, including educational

dynamics (Ferreira, 2001; Johnson, 2007).

School Culture Complexity

The Complexity Theory allows researchers to study and analyze complex

systems (Ferreira, 2001). Ferreira (2001) described the relationship between complexity

and disorder. If a system is of low complexity, the order is easily understood, if the

system is too complex, such as a completely random system, then disorder is assured;

however, Ferreira (2001) stated the Complexity Theory helps us explain systems that are

neither simple, nor random, such as educational culture. Jones (2013) discussed the

Complexity Theory as it applies to educational culture. He posited individual influence,

such as student development will begin to influence the culture as a whole and each

interaction, both positive and negative can have a small, but influential impact (Jones,

2013).

Considering Dewey's framework of intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and

physical development as the criteria of influence within the democratic, complex system,

a school culture might potentially be cultivated that would promote an environment of

intellectual curiosity, social connectedness, emotional stability, ethical standards, and

physical health, resulting in higher academic achievement. Potentially, an important

follow-up question to ask then is how much influence is required to secure a system of

positive impact? Malcolm Gladwell (2000) proposed the idea of cultural tipping points.

Gladwell felt, much like the flu passing from person to person involuntarily, social goals,

concepts, ideas, and values could equally be passed from person to person involuntarily.

A number of people holding these ideals would eventually reach a tipping point within

the population and the tipping point would result in a social pressure, causing the culture to develop along behavioral lines. Gladwell (2000) suggested these epidemics can be negative in nature, such as the Micronesia Suicide Epidemic, Belgium Coke Scare, and the Columbine School Shootings, yet Gladwell also suggested the effect can be a positive influence, such as the recent cultural movement away from cigarettes. Regardless of influence, once the social phenomenon reached a tipping point, the system would begin to perpetuate itself (Gladwell, 2000).

When considering the work of Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916), Ferreira (2001), and Gladwell (2000), a construct for a possible effective educational system can be proposed, a system based on individual intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development, within a deep, complex system of self-reinforcement and social consciousness, self-perpetuating in a positive direction. If the tipping point of positive cultural effect is essential to societal development, then understanding how much influence is required would be highly advantageous for educational leaders to understand.

In his book, *Simple Complexity*, Johnson (2007) suggested culture is neither chaotic nor simple. Because memory provides a feedback loop for understanding, students will be influenced by their surroundings. This feedback allows the student culture to be both complex, yet organized to some degree. Johnson (2007) suggested just because things are complex, there is still a degree they can be managed. Unfortunately, a magic number does not exist t researchers can point to as the tipping point threshold; however, the science continues to be refined. Scientists are studying various complex and chaotic systems using mathematical models. Senkerik, Oplatkova, and Zelinka (2011), attempted to show chaotic systems in certain environments can be influenced or

estimated to a degree of accuracy, so hopefully when further understanding is completed, the benefits to educational prosperity will be understood.

Educational Inequality and School Identifier Correlations

Complexity science highlights the importance of initial starting points in a system and how if even slightly deviated at inception will result in completely different paths (Johnson, 2007). Urban and Wagoner (2009) suggested higher education, during the early stages of American educational history, was predominantly for wealthy, White males. Urban and Wagoner (2009) described the inherent social realities during that time, including the lack of educational opportunities for women, minorities, and less-fortunate financially. As a result, it was important to review the impact on socio-economic status, race, and gender.

Socio-economic inequality. The association of socio-economic status and the influence on academic achievement have been long established (Štraus, 2014). Štraus (2014) used Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) data to confirm the long standing relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement among high school students. Štraus (2014) considered achievement in Germany, Canada, Slovenia, and the United States. The United States scored slightly below Canada in socio-economic status, but similar to Germany; however, The United States scored lowest on mathematics academic achievement among the four countries (Štraus, 2014). Socio-economic status, although a statistically significant contributing factor, was not the only contributing factor; student attitudes played a predominant role in achievement as well (Štraus, 2014).

Considering the primary school experience of students with lower socio-economic status, Shore (2015) analyzed two groups; one group from an affluent neighborhood, and one located in a less affluent neighborhood of Bristol. Shore (2015) analyzed the results and suggested a link between affluence and language acquisition, showing students with higher socio-economic status out-performed equal age peers from less affluent neighborhood. Exposure was a highlighted factor of consideration in the experience at home. It is well known, lower socio-economic status has damaging effects on student academic achievement (Letourneau, Duffett-Leger, Levac, Watson, & Young-Morris, 2011); however, the researchers sought out specifically the type of impact. The objective of the study, (Letourneau et al., 2011) was to determine the impact low socio-economic status has on behavioral, cognitive, and language acquisition using a meta-analysis technique. Children from birth to 19 years of age were considered. The results indicated small, but statistically significant negative effects on the three outcomes; behavioral, cognitive development, and language acquisition.

In a Meta-Analysis, Ewijk and Sleegers (2010) reviewed 30 previous studies on the topic of socio-economic status and academic achievement in relation to peer effect. A meta-regression analysis was used to analyze the results. The selection of the studies had to meet specific criteria, including the effect of the estimate of an increase in mean SES, the dependent variable was of the student's individual academic achievement in mathematics, language, science, or general studies, and the estimation model had to use a covariate. The studies analyzed by Ewijk and Sleegers (2010) were published between January 1986 and January 2006. Students were between 6 and 18 years old, and the studies used leveled test scores. Researchers, when interpreting the results determined

the way the study was done can affect the results significantly; however, Ewijk and Sleegers (2010) indicated only minimal connection between peer influence when associated with socio-economic status and academic achievement.

The debate on the relationship of socio-economic status and academic achievement still rages on (Ewijk & Sleegers, 2010; Letourneau et al., 2011; Shore, 2015). Researchers concluded that the relationship seemed to be a combination of factors including skill building, exposure, attitude, behavior, physical health, and peer relationships (Ewijk & Sleegers, 2010; Letourneau et al., 2011; Shore, 2015). The researchers (Ewijk & Sleegers, 2010; Letourneau et al., 2011; Shore, 2015) identified intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical reasons as potential factors, as outlined by Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909, 1916).

Race inequality. Racism has been part of the history in the United States since its inception (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Although racism has gone through varying phases, from slavery, to separate but equal, to integration, to its current state of diversification, race has always been a struggle to reconcile for educators and American society (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). The equity in American culture has always been one of unresolved issues and festering inequity (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Frequently, teachers and schools have tried to avoid the race issue as to not offend students; however, students of color are well aware, even at a young age, of the atrocities of our past (Doucet & Adair, 2013). The reality of growing up as a child of color forces these students to internalize the world around them based on their own identity, and the perceptions of others (Doucet & Adair, 2013). As a result of this fact, racial understanding should be an integral part of our teaching philosophy (Doucet & Adair,

2013). Although typical arguments include phrases such as, "The Children are too young to talk about it" (p. 88) and "I don't want anyone to feel uncomfortable," (p. 88). Doucet and Adair (2013) argued children should be introduced to these differences so all children have a sense of the past. The lack of discussion protects White children, but the practice isolated the children of color who were trying to reconcile their own questions about race (Doucet & Adair, 2013).

A quick way to consider the impact associated with race is to review standardized test results between the different races in respect to the social psychology (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). The author reviewed studies associated with the success of White students versus minority students based on social factors, including stereotype and identity threat (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). Information was retrieved for both middle-school and high-school samples, specifically from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), between the years of 1996 and 2002. On all factors, including years, subjects, and grades, White students significantly outperformed their Black and Hispanic counterparts. Mendoza-Denton (2014) contended that often these discrepancies in performance are attributed to test bias, but he stipulated societal bias might be causing a greater impact. In the end, the author concluded statistically significant performance differences do exist, but one way to mitigate these differences is to establish a social culture of multicultural identity that helps all members achieve a higher level of creativity and problem solving.

Standardized tests have become increasingly important in recent years given the continued federal focus on educational achievement (Salinas & Garr, 2009). The achievement gap between minority students and White students is more severe with the

recent increased focus on testing (Salinas & Garr, 2009). The authors suggested that looking at minority academic performance as it currently exists is a mistake, and consideration should be given to factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, creativity, collaboration, innovation, learning strategies, goal setting, and orientation given the recent focus on career development in a learning-centered model approach (Salinas & Garr, 2009). Salinas and Garr (2009) interpreted the results and concluded that the more multifaceted approach to learning resulted in a more equitable distribution of achievement.

Racism can be seen as an intentional act, as summed up by proponents of the Critical Race Theory who stated "Critical race theory (CRT) views education as one of the principal means by which White supremacy is maintained and presented as normal in society" (Gillborn, 2014, p. 26). Recently, neoliberalism has taken on added importance in educational policy decision making, creating an atmosphere of tying success to individual merit and hard work, while cutting back on policies that support minorities (Gillborn, 2014). This reality bears out in the performance on minority success rates (Gillborn, 2014).

Others see racism as less intentional but just as damaging and impactful. Educational policy was not necessarily intended to shape cultural development (Urban & Wagoner, 1996); however, in one of the most influential pieces of legislation in regards to race and social impact, *Brown v. Board of Education*, provided a catalyst to life inside and outside of the classroom. The decision helped spark civil right movement initiatives and galvanize the Black community (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). Over the course of the

following decades, the pursuit of equality was sought out by Blacks, women, and even Catholics as John F. Kennedy won the presidency (Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

Gender inequality. Much like the connection between American culture and classism and racism, sexism has also been a long-established practice in America; however, gender was the first of the three to be addressed at both the common school level and within educational practices (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). In the early to mid-1800s, females were a common part of school, and girls were admitted without the fear of prejudice. Adult females, given the perceived nature of being nurturing, were given roles as teachers for both boys and girls at the common school level; however, men continued to dominate the more prestigious positions at the high-school and university levels (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). In essence, men retained the controlling power within education (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Much like the stereotypical beliefs in the 1800s outlined by Urban and Wagoner (2009), stereotypes might still be affecting females' choices today (Ing, Aschbacher, & Tsai, 2014). Middle school girls were far less interested in the field of engineering than were boys (Ing et al., 2014). However, participation among girls was not pervasive among all scientific disciplines, including biological sciences or careers that revolved around the nurturing of animals or people (Ing et al., 2014).

One area of focus that should be considered is gender equity in the workplace, including positions and monetary impact. Olson (2013) examined the relationship of human capital models and gender pay gaps. Olson (2013) concluded pay gaps are a confirmed part of American culture, and human capital models certainly contribute to the overall discrepancy between wage equity.

Given the perceived effect on stereotype influence and gender bias, it is essential to address the negative impact (Zawadzki, Danube, & Shields, 2012). Zawadzki et al. (2012) examined the effect of gender identity on the promotion of self-efficacy. Using a system of Workshop Activity for Gender Equity Simulation (WAGES), the researchers concluded the proposed activity could benefit institutions in addressing some of the factors that impede self-efficacy (Zawadzki et al., 2012).

Socio-economic, race, and gender inequity conclusion. It is apparent from the studies on socio-economic, race, and gender factors that the evolution of American has played a role in our current state of affairs (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Part of this realization is current and past educational practices have resulted in a negative academic impact for students of low socio-economic status, minorities, and females. As a result of this understanding on inequitable practices, educators need to look at factors that might provide insights into why the expectation of equal performance on standardized tests might not be the best model of evaluation for all students until all factors, both academic and non-academic are fully understood. Next, I will be review literature on the socio-economic status, race, and gender correlation to social, emotional, ethical, and physical factors.

Social Identifiers and Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Physical Correlations

As Dewey (1897; 1902; 1909; 1916) highlighted in his early works, educational development can only be fostered when considering the development of the whole-child. Contemporary authors (Achor, 2010; Friedman & Friedman, 1980; Gladwell, 2008; Goleman, 2006; Robinson, 2011) highlight the importance of social, emotional, ethical, and physical factors to the development in academia. If true, educational leaders,

teachers, and parents might notice a negative relationship between the socio-economic

status, race, and gender in regards to social connectedness, well-being, behavior, and

health.

      Socio-Economic Correlation. Potential negative correlations exist between

socio-economic status and positive social, emotional, ethical, and physical attributes. A

negative correlation between school connectedness and associations with deviant peer

relationships were identified in Grade 6 students entering middle school from low socio-

economic backgrounds (Rudasill et al., 2014). Rudasill et al. (2014) concluded from the

results, the longer the year progressed for the students, the less connected they felt within

the school, and a higher the rate of deviant behavior relationships were fostered. In

particular, students of low socio-economic status should be identified and school

connectedness should be prioritized, especially among the male population. The

researchers also identified the GPA impact based on the level of school connectedness,

through the identifier of school support. This study was particularly important on two

fronts, the association between deviant behavior and low economic identity and lack of

school connectedness among this low socio-economic population.

      In a study conducted on socioeconomic status and child mental health, Bøe et al.

(2014) reported a positive relationship between SES and negative behavioral attributes,

including anxiety, depression, aggressiveness, oppositional behavior, and hyperactivity.

Bøe et al. (2014) studied over 2,043 Grade 5 to Grade 7 students using a survey.

Although the researchers went on to suggest that parent training, in regards to child-

wellbeing, would might behoove school educators to adopt similar practices in schools.

Martens et al. (2014) conducted a study in the Provence of Manitoba, Canada. A correlation was identified between a child's SES and his or her overall health and educational outcomes (Martens et al., 2014). Martens et al. (2014) stipulated that housing is a "determinate" (p. 2103) on health. The researchers suggested government officials should target these families to receive extra physical health procurements to improve the situation.

Overall, SES seems to have a negative relationship with all of Dewey's positive factors of educational development. Poverty is associated with lower connectedness, reduced well-being, negative behavior, and poorer health. An interesting finding was the overlap of effect on the other developments, such as lower connectedness leading to higher deviant behavior and lower well-being associated with poorer health. Overlapping influences should be considered.

Racial Correlation. Similar to SES correlations, there are negative correlations between race and social, emotional, ethical, and physical attributes. In particular, students of color are a highly vulnerable population (Rose et al., 2014). This realization has resulted in an emphasis placed on the mental health of adolescent Blacks, including a shifting away from mental illness to the development of mental health techniques (Rose et al., 2014). This proactive approach has resulted in a shift from reactive responses to an intentional focus on mental health development. Three major social groups were considered within the study, including family, school, and religion (Rose et al., 2014).

In a study on social support and neighborhood safety among urban adolescents of color, Daly et al., (2008), hypothesized that neighborhood risk factors might influence school engagement. The results of the study lead the authors to correlate the connection

between neighborhood incivilities, such as a perceived lack of safe places (e.g., like parks, libraries, community centers) and school engagement. The researchers' hypothesis was not accepted, although it was postulated that the participants indicated high levels of family, teacher, and peer support. The connections would be in line with overlapping influence on attributes (Daly et al., 2008).

One way to test differences in psychosocial effects of race is based on student transitions. Educational leaders have many times associated the developmental trajectory of students to transitional events (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Researchers (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Cauce, Hannan, & Sargeant, 1992) suggested negative emotions intensify during transitional events; however, these feelings are more pronounced in students of color and can lead to a disproportioned amount of failure among minority youth. Significant achievement losses were noted by Gutman and Midgley (2000) for Black students experiencing a transition from elementary to middle school. In a small scale study, using one middle school and one high school, Akos and Galassi (2004) included 173 Grade 6 students and 320 Grade 9 students from a southeastern school district. A School Transition Questionnaire (STQ) was used to ascertain feelings of transitional events, sense of connectedness, and persons who were helpful during the transition. The researchers indicated a greatest difficulty for Latino middle-school students (Akos & Galassi, 2004). These findings were in line with reduced GPAs for students with cultural and racial differences (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Akos and Galassi (2004) further highlighted the need for additional support for minority groups to enhance connectedness and mitigate negative feelings associated with cultural differences.

Gender Correlation. In the same study, Akos and Galassi (2004) measured the results among genders for negative transitional effects. It was stipulated that girls needed more social and emotional support, in comparison to boys who required more academic support (Diemert, 1992). Although the study for females was inconsistent with past research on the subject, a potential reason for the discrepancy is the high amount of connectedness the girls in the study indicated on the questionnaire. This realization was confirmed by Osterman (2000) when the researcher demonstrated the connection between belonging and school-connectedness to positive academic outcomes.

Impact of oppression. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1971), the author's poignant account of oppression and the fear of freedom provided insights into those suffering from a lack thereof, and ultimately the perpetuation of the status quo. Freire (1971) highlighted the connection of humanization and dehumanization, a social relationship between oppressor and the oppressed. The difficulty lies in the oppressed to not dehumanize the oppressors, as ultimately that perpetuate the system, but rather be the advocates for humanization for all (Freire, 1971). The dilemma is that any attempt of the oppressors to lessen their power manifests itself in a sense of false generosity; therefore, the real power results in the oppressed rising up to not only liberate themselves, but the oppressors as well (Freire, 1971). In much the same way the civil rights movement for both African Americans and women suffered to bring about equality and still do (Urban & Wagoner, 1996), all populations of the oppressed, such as those identified by the "Big Eight" social identifiers, must seek out equality as well (Freire, 1971).

Freire (1971) explained the philosophy of education as he saw it during his life, the teacher was to provide the student with knowledge, considering the students as

vessels or containers to be filled. In a sense, Freire (1971) believed the children to be an oppressed class, and the teachers the oppressors who maintained control and power. Students to be fully liberated must be part of the process of learning (Freire, 1971). A common partnership must be cultivated to help the children, much like the oppressed classes, to become enlightened and liberated (Freire, 1971). As Dewey suggested, the intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development would allow individuals, and ultimately culture, to find a sense of quality and liberation (Dewey, 1897).

Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Physical Correlations and Educational Effects

The evolution of education in the United States, specifically within junior highs and middle schools, has resulted in a system that has struggled to meet the needs of young adolescents (Robinson, 2011). In the early development of the United States schools provided students with an opportunity to continue their education; however, during this time not everyone was expected to continue with school (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). As The United States continued to develop and in the mid-1800s, education was emphasized for all students, not just for those who were White males and had the wealth to continue with school (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). However, since the development of schools and the development of compulsory education, schools have struggled to balance intellectual endeavors, with the social, emotional, ethical, and physical needs of the early adolescent child (Dewey, 1897).

The understanding of the adolescent brain is becoming more multifaceted and complex (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). As adolescent brains, behavior, and cognition is more thoroughly developed, the implications to education could be

significant (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). The ability to increase skills such as decision-making, working memory, selective attention, and voluntary response inhibition allow educators to increase executive function. Blakemore and Choudhury (2006) revealed the growing evidence that social function, such as understanding others mental states, beliefs, and intentions help to develop executive function skills. In essence, Blakemore and Choudhury (2006) might be referencing the scientific rational to Dewey's work on social influence and academic success. The implications for teenagers could be significant to schools given the limited time period of social and emotional development in adolescents (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Further research was recommended by Blakemore & Choudhury (2006) so a "theoretical framework that regards motor, affective, social, and perceptual function as intertwined promises to further inform our understanding of typical and atypical adolescent behavior" (p. 308).

Social Factors. The purpose of the social factors section is to show correlations between social factors and academic achievement. Social connectedness, school connectedness, teacher support, school climate, and social bonds will be identified and the corresponding research will be highlighted. Hopefully, increased social connections results in a positive correlation with academic achievement.

Niehaus et al. (2012) conducted a longitudinal study and examined the correlation between school connectedness and academic outcomes. The researchers collected data from two middle schools from a large urban public school district in the midwest. Three hundred and thirty Grade 6 students were recruited for participation. Over 90% of the students qualified for free/reduced lunch. The researchers found three important factors about Grade 6 students: (a) students' perceptions of school support declined during the

first year of middle school, (b) students who identified more than average school support had higher GPAs than those students who reported less than average, and (c) girls generally reported a higher level of connectedness than did boys. Also, Niehaus et al. (2012) noticed Grade 6 students who reported positive level of support correlated strongly with higher GPAs. Limitations discussed by the researchers included a limited number of participants, all participants were from the same school district, and Latino students were under-represented. Niehaus et al. (2012) summarized schools should focus on the importance of support for Grade 6 students.

Like Niehaus et al. (2012), Juvonen (2007) identified teacher support as a critical factor as it relates to student engagement and referred to this relationship as the "most salient" (p. 200). Along with this finding, Juvonen (2007) contributed factors of intellectual development to social alienation, peer relationships, peer rejection, and bullying. Juvonen (2007) posited although connectedness could not be seen as a positive causal function as it relates to intellectual success, it has strong correlation as a protective and supportive function.

Zullig, et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the factors of school climate and the impact on various school domains. The sample consisted of 2,049 students, ranging from 12 to 18 years of age. The schools were located in a Midwestern state, and a total of three rural school districts were used to collect data. Roughly, 45% of the sample consisted of middle school students in Grades 6-8. Zullig et al. (2011) recognized academic performance was related to school climate satisfaction, but the researchers hoped in the future additional factors would be studied and identified. Limitations included a sample size of three school districts that were mainly composed of

Caucasian students. In all three studies, the researchers (Niehaus et al., 2012; Juvonen 2007; Zullig et al. 2011) suggested a strong correlation between academic success and school climate and support.

Walton, Cohen, Cwir, and Spencer (2012) identified the strong need for forming and maintaining social bonds among humans. Walton et al. (2012) offered course credit to 75 European undergraduate students in exchange for participation in the social experiment study. The context of the class was in relation to mathematics; all the subjects showed positive perceptions. The final sample was reduced to 43 women and 29 men, after three students were excluded, two showed no recall, and one fell asleep. The subjects were then randomly placed into a control group, skill-promotive context condition, or relational context condition.   The researchers showed motivation increased in the social-relational group more than in the skills-promotive framing, and control group. The researchers also indicated motivation was increased by the mere sense of belonging or connectedness (Walton et al., 2012).

In a more comprehensive study, Frydenberg et al. (2009) collected data from 536 students (295 girls & 241 boys). The sample of students was from nine Catholic schools located in a metropolitan area of Melbourne, Australia. Participants' were all enrolled in Grade 8 English and ages ranged between 12 and 14 years. The researchers indicated the link between coping skills, school connectedness, and wellbeing (Frydenberg et al., 2009). Frydenberg et al. (2009) proposed increasing student connectedness provided the student with a framework for coping with negative events, and if the connectedness was lacking, depressive symptoms and behaviors occurred more frequently. Limitations included a small sample size and the study used only Catholic schools.

Student Success Skills (SSS) Program is an intervention based program, delivered by school counselors with the purpose of increasing learning and personal skills among students. The program focuses on the development of executive function development, school connectedness, and academic achievement. In an effort to verify the effectiveness of the program, Lemberger, Selig, Bowers, and Rogers (2015) examined the effects of the program on 193 middle school students. The students were predominately Hispanics from low socio-economic environments. The study was conducted in the southwestern United States. Although the study was small in scope, the SSS program is quite extensive, including 9,000 school counselors and over a million students. Findings from the study were used to support the growing literature on the effectiveness of the SSS program (Lemberger et al., 2015). With the ever growing focus on academic efforts to increase academic achievement, the inclusion of social connectedness efforts may boost the overall effectiveness of the academic achievement programs (Lemberger et al., 2015).

The ability to increase school connectedness is a challenge for school leaders (Lapan, Wells, Peterson, & McCann, 2014). Many principals are forced to start a year under incredible pressure, such as the principal who experienced two stabbings over the course of two weeks. The principal clearly understood the impact of social unrest and academic achievement. There are certain environmental factors that can mitigate potential negative social risk factors, such as violence (Lapan, et al., 2014). In Lapan et al. (2014) the factors included social competence that helped children thrive in school environments. The strongest protective factor was school connectedness that enhanced academic and non-academic outcomes (Lapan et al., 2014). The purpose of the study was to test the effectiveness of school counselors and the implementation of increased

school connectedness and how that correlated with mitigating risk factors (Lapan et al., 2014). Lapan et al. (2014) postulated from the data that when students felt connected to the school environment, those students scored better on academic and non-academic outcomes. Counselors who promoted school connectedness increased protective attributes that helped students insulate themselves from potential risk factors (Lapan et al., 2014).

Given the perceived importance of school connectedness (Frydenberg et al., 2009; Lapan et al., 2014; Lemberger et al., 2015; Walton et al., 2012; Zullig, et al., 2011), it would behoove educators to understand the developmental mechanism of social competence (Han, 2014). School readiness and academic success has been shown to positively correlate with a student's ability with social competence (Han, 2014; Malik & Shujja, 2013). In essence, educators might be wise to get a deeper perspective on the four main areas of social competence: (a) social skill approach; (b) sociometrics; (c) relationships; and (d) functional approach (Malik & Shujja, 2013).

Human behavior is greatly shaped by the society and culture (Malik & Shujja, 2013). Henceforth, social norms would expect to place a role in learning and social dynamics (Malik & Shujja, 2013). Malik & Shujja (2013) researched a collection of pro-social behaviors and the predictability with academic achievement among low and high achieving students in Pakistan. Although a significant body of research is available correlating social competence and pro-social behaviors to academic achievement (Malik & Shujja, 2013), the researchers concluded the social uniqueness of Pakistan's culture may provide insight into the relationship with social competence and academic success. The sample comprised 204 children; 107 high achievers and 97 low achievers from

grades four to eight; ages nine to 13 years. Students attended both private and public institutions. Data were collected in small groups, ranging from 10 to 15 students, and assessment measures included the Social Competence Scale for Children (SCSC), academic achievement measure, and a demographic and consent form. The researchers concluded that high achievers outperformed low achievers in social competence and that social competence overall was significantly correlated with academic achievement (Malik & Shujja, 2013). The researchers speculated that the need to feel accepted among the children's peer group may influence emotional feeling and ethical behavior for fit within the group (Malik & Shujja, 2013). Given the understanding of social competence and academic achievement, educators would be wise to educate teachers in the development of social ability among children.

Han (2014) stipulated the importance of social competence and the corresponding teacher professional development associated with positive growth. Unfortunately, professional development opportunities are both limited in research, practice, policy and administrative encouragement (Han, 2014). Teachers are much more often encouraged to attend professional development in the areas of curriculum and traditional knowledge transmission (Han, 2014). The conclusion based on the research findings was for teachers to seek out and attend professional development opportunities that enhance socio-cultural perspectives in the classroom. The enhanced perspectives gained by teachers would allow them to better understand the development of social ability and the resulting impact on the educational development of the students that they teach. These findings should persuade educators to look further into the cognitive functions that lead children to social competency, including the biological mechanisms in the brain.

The brain is directly affected by social interactions, and the ability to understand social dynamics gives children a biological advantage (Goleman, 2006). Goleman (2006) understood children can retain a higher amount of knowledge and comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information more thoroughly in a social context, possibly implying that positive social interactions may influence the amount of academic knowledge retained. However, Goleman (2006) also realized that social interactions, when negatively associated, might hinder the brain from remembering knowledge, given a person under stress has a reduced capacity for learning.

As more contemporary researchers, educators, and psychologists, (Frydenberg et al., 2009; Goleman, 2006; Lapan et al., 2014; Lemberger et al., 2015; Walton et al., 2012; Zullig, Huebner, and Patton, 2011) learned more about social dynamics, the function of the brain, and the relationship to academic success, the more the research seems to corroborate Dewey's early assumptions on the importance of social consciousness and dynamics in schools. Dewey spoke of this thought in his Pedagogic Creed (1897), stating a child's ability to learn is based on social interactions and relative to the world around the child. This content allows learning to be two-fold, part psychological and part sociological (Dewey, 1897).

Emotional Factors. Dewey (1895), in his paper, *The Theory of Emotion (II) The Significance of Emotion*, highlights the connection between emotion and rational thought process. Dewey felt rationality, as part of intellect, is not separate from emotion or its antithesis, but emotion allows one to be rational (Dewey, 1895). Much like social development, Dewey highlighted emotional development as part of the complete development of the child.

A modern author, Daniel Goleman felt emotional development was equally as fundamental to overall academic success as intellectual development (Goleman, 1996). Goleman (1996) highlighted self-awareness, self-discipline, and empathy as way to strengthen intellectual development. Much like intellect, Goleman believed emotional development could be nurtured and developed over time. Both Dewey and Goleman, encourage modern educators to study the links of emotional stability and development and the relationship with academic achievement.

A major component of emotional development is the aspect of psychological well-being (Rüppel, Liersch, & Walter, 2015). In a study conducted by Rüppel et al. (2015), the authors examined the relationship between well-being and academic success within the context of socioeconomic status and school environment. The study consisted of 508 boys and girls in Grade 6. Although the results were inconclusive in totality, the researchers (Rüppel et al., 2015) reported an indirect positive effect between well-being and academic success, but also a negative effect of subjective well-being. Rüppel et al. (2015) contributed this effect to the complexity of the study. The reason this study was included was to show that complexity of human development and the importance of narrowed research.

A child's experience in school is often influenced by his or her emotional state. One of the best ways to ensure an increased level of emotional stability is to develop a relationship between teacher and student (Suldo et al., 2009). In the article, *Teacher Support and Adolescents' Subjective Well-Being: A Mixed Methods Investigation*, Suldo et al. (2009) significantly narrowed their focus of research. The researchers highlighted the recent emphasis to identify prevention and early intervention among the best ways to

ensure mental health and promote successful education (Suldo et al., 2009). This study

consisted of 401 students whom completed self-reported measures on the Subjective

Well-Being (SWB) assessment and 50 students whom participated in focus groups.

Findings in the study highlight the importance of emotional well-being based on teacher

support. Social support based on teacher interaction accounted for 16% of the variance in

feelings of students' well-being (Suldo et al., 2009). The findings supported past

research that teachers support correlated with emotional well-being, academic

achievement, and social skill development (Suldo et al., 2009). The researchers

suggested that middle-school educators focus on classroom environments that promote

emotional connection to boost academic achievement. While the researchers highlight

the importance of school counselors in developing these strategies, it might be imperative

for schools as a whole to educate all teachers in the practice of emotional development in

each and every classroom.

Beyond the scope of adolescents, mental health may continue to play a role in our

overall development. A relatively new area of study is the connection between mental

health and academic success in college. Depression was a significant predictor of lower

GPA and higher rates of dropping out (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Hunt, 2009). This

predictor was even further recognized in students with anxiety disorder (Eisenberg et al.,

2009). Eisenberg et al. (2009) conducted the study at a large, public university. The

sample consistent of approximately 2,800 students, both attending graduate and

undergraduate classes. The initial survey was conducted in 2005 and the follow-up

survey was conducted in 2007. The results were true for both males and females and

undergraduates and graduates, alike. Unusually, the results were not influenced by

socioeconomic status, binge drinking, and exercise that were also considered. Eisenberg et al. (2009) suggested the importance of having intentional mental health programs at universities to help those students who experience increased stress and anxiety, to manage their condition and increased the likelihood of increased GPAs and completing college.

In recent years, an increased interest in the fields of neuropsychology and cognitive neuroscience, have arisen; including the connection between emotions and a particular region, the amygdala. In a study by Phelps (2006), five topic areas were explored, including "emotional learning, emotion and memory, emotion's influence on attention and perception, processing emotion and social stimuli, and changing emotional responses" (p. 27). Phelps (2006) concluded that the connection between emotion and cognition is a complex and intertwined during multiple stages of the stimulus process. Emotion was shown to be an essential part of understanding effective cognition, but if a study is not narrowed, the results may show as inconclusive (Phelps, 2006). This complexity extends to social context as well.

In some research, emotional development is not directly related to academic success, but another major area of human development, social development. As highlighted by Phelps (2006), the interplay between social context and emotional context are closely related. Ross, Shochet, and Bellair (2010) studied the correlation between depressive symptoms and school connectedness and social skills. Their sample consisted of 127 sixth- and seventh-grade students enrolled in Catholic schools located in Brisbane. Ages ranged from 10 to 13 years of age and girls made up a majority of the sample at 66%. Ross et al. (2010) noticed a "significant" (p. 273) relationship between depressive

symptoms and lack of school connectedness. The researchers proposed (Ross et al., 2010) as students reach middle school age, school relationships have a greater impact on the emotional health of the young adolescent as compared to children during their elementary years, who rely more on family relationships. Given this realization, it might make sense for middle school educators to intentionally focus on developing positive school culture and peer interaction.

Ashley et al. (2012) also focused on the emotional effects of connection and perceptions of emotion. Students in this study were comprised of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders during 2008-2009 academic year (Ashley et al., 2012). The students attended an urban school in the southeastern United States. Of the 22 schools in the district, three middle schools were selected. The sample consisted of 1,223 students. Like Ross et al. (2010), Ashley et al. (2012) showed a correlation between positive social connectedness and positive emotional responses (happiness) and lack of connectedness and negative emotional response (depression and loneliness). The limitation in the study was the students were selected for convenience and may have resulted in selection bias. This study (Ashley et al., 2012) also pointed to the connection between social development and emotional development.

Dewey expressed the need for learning in a social context, as highlighted in Dewey's Pedagogic Creed (1897). Although the neuroscience was not available at the time, Dewey used his own keen observation as the mechanism of understanding. He also highlighted the importance of emotional stability, stating "I believe this educational process has two sides – one psychological and one sociological" (Dewey, 1897, pg. 1).

Dewey understood not only the connection of both emotional and social learning, but also the reinforcement the two developments had on one another.

Ethical Factors. Dewey also addressed moral development in his Pedagogic Creed (Dewey, 1897) and in his book, *Moral Principles in Education* (1909). A connection to social and emotional development is essential to a child growing up as a productive member in society, Dewey (1897) posited. As moral development begins in the home, school is not exempt from the teaching of morality, but an extension of value set developed in the home, or lack thereof (Dewey, 1897).

In his work on moral development, Dewey (1909) highlighted the difficulties of school leaders, who were under a constant barrage of criticism from the lay public. Unlike many professions, school leaders receive consistent feedback based on speculation and uneducated opinion (Robinson, 2011). Dewey (1909) believed this struggle stemmed from the fact that education is part of the public sphere, much like politics and social order. As a result, he emphasized the necessity of teachers to be trained in matters of intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical matters. Education, Dewey (1897) stated, fails because teachers and school leaders consider education isolated from social and emotional development and educators fail to understand that education is an integral part of social life, hence a place to cultivate values.

Each child learns individually, satisfying individual desires and passions, but also within a society, conforming to societal moral norms and cultures (Dewey, 1914). In 1776, Adam Smith, often referred to as the Father of Modern Economics, wrote in his book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), individual ambition and self-interest was in cultures best interest. Dewey's (1916) and Smith's

(1776) opinions are in stark contrast. While both recognize that self-interest is part of the human condition, Dewey (1897) felt that without consideration for societal norms, the society would cease to function productively.

Perhaps Dewey was a precursor to John Nash's (1949) work, on game theory and social dynamics. John Nash proposed, Adam Smith's work was incomplete and in contrast to Smith, an individual has a social responsibility that is in the individual's and society's best interest. Nash believed that by taking individual advantage all of the time, as proposed by Smith, created an environment that produced results that would actually impede the success of an individual over time. This belief is demonstrated in Nash's game theory (1949); participants not only have determined their choice, but too fully benefit must predict the actions of others to achieve optimal results. This understanding is the basic construct for social understanding, empathy, and moral responsibility.

As a result, Dewey's Pedagogic Creed (1897) highlighted these fundamental principles of development, although that increased the need for developmental understanding in schools given the Dewey's theories on societal impact. Simpson and Sacken (2015) considered Dewey's philosophy meaningful, concluding the importance of personal, organizational, and societal ethical growth. Simpson and Sacken (2015) indicated a state of equilibrium and disequilibrium between individual and societal norms, influenced the ethical development of a child. In essence, it is the interplay between our individual needs and those of society that allow a young person to develop ethically.

Vidourek et al. (2011) stated "school connectedness is a leading protective factor against youth engagement in risky behaviors" (p. 116). These behaviors include drug

use, alcohol, violence, and sexual behaviors. In their study, the participants included teachers from elementary and middle schools in Ohio. To represent an appropriate sample size, 764 teachers were required with a 50% response rate assumed. The survey was completed by 419 teachers (86.9% Female). The teachers indicated in the survey, an overwhelming majority used techniques to improve school connectedness either daily or weekly. The researchers mentioned specifically, middle school teachers need to be vigilant as middle school students tend to increase the frequency of risk-taking behaviors, and schools would be best served to increase programing focusing on emotional health and ethical decision making (Vidourek et al., 2011).

Conduct problems were studied in a year-long study by Loukas et al. (2009) in association with school connectedness. The sample size consisted of 500, 10- to 14-year old students attending three suburban middle schools in central Texas. Demographics were represented by European American (76.4%), Latino (15.8%), and Black (3.8%) students. Loukas et al. (2009) surmised, not only was there a correlation between positive school connectedness and positive conduct, but after a year of study, if a student's perceptions increased on the positive connectedness scale, a decrease in negative conduct was seen.

Morale development is essential to understanding family and societal responsibilities (Tichy, Johnson, Johnson, & Roseth, 2010). However, Tichy et al. (2010) pointed out many schools focus on the desirability of moral values, not the actually principals of developing oneself to be a morale being; essentially, how to be rule followers, not moral decision makers. In the study, the researchers (Tichy et al., 2010) the teaching of individual moral development through constructivist controversy.

Following the teaching of constructivist controversy, ethical skills, academic

achievement, and social independence were measured for relative impact. The study

consisted of 56, fourth through sixth grade students (24 males, 32 females); ages ranged

from 7 to 11 years. The studies duration consisted of 10 days, 55 minutes per day.

Overall, the researchers highlighted that intentional moral development through

constructivist controversy, rather than individualistic learning, resulted in greater moral

development, greater ethical skills, higher academic achievement, and a more positive

attitude toward competition (Tichy et al., 2010). The researchers noted (Tichy et al.,

2010), these results are in alignment with Piaget's (1932) development theory.

Dewey (1909), highlighted the distinction between morality and moral idea

processing. Moral education is fluid, and changes over time, whereas morality is

universal (Dewey, 1909). The realization of the moral distinction, according to Dewey,

requires moral education to present, whatsoever the topic. The process of intentional

moral development, not just the willingness to conduct oneself ethically, allows for the

crossover of understanding morality. When successful, moral development improves

society and individual well-being. Unfortunately, Dewey (1909), suggested that this

realization also requires teachers and administration to focus on moral teaching, and

much like today, teachers back then, felt they did teach morality, but they were in the

right, and students were in the wrong. By definition of moral teaching, Dewey (1909)

described this technique as a fallacy of understanding that hindered overall intellectual

moral development.

Physical Development. Dewey wrote extensively on the topics of intellectual,

social, emotional, and ethical education, but wrote less in regards to physical

development. This understanding could very well be due to the limited knowledge of the brain at the turn of the 20th century. If the brain, the physical adaptive mechanism that allows one to think logically, socially, emotionally, and ethically, is either promoted or hindered in regards to experience, it would seem by default that Dewey would indeed place physical development among the priority of topics explored in school. And much like the other developments, simply not that basic statement of health, but rather an intellectual discussion on the importance of choices in regards to tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and, physical fitness. Nevertheless, Dewey did make mention to the types of learning that infer physical action as part of the learning process.

In his Pedagogic Creed, Dewey (1897) mentioned that the active side of learning proceeds the passive; hence that action allows the muscular to be developed, then the sensory, enhancing the consciousness. The passive style of education therefore works against the very laws of natural learning (Dewey, 1897). If best implemented, imagery, energy, and attention stimulate learning process for children, and only our ability to actively connect allow children to open up to the wonders that they are taught (Dewey, 1897). If true, the active engagement of the brain and body allow teachers to be more effective.

The brain interprets the world through its five senses. The ability to take in information thorough vision, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling helps the brain make sense of the world. Akos (2006) highlighted the importance of extracurricular activity and academic achievement in his article, *Extracurricular Participation and the Transition to Middle School*. Akos (2006) showed a positive statistically significant difference in connection to those students participating in extracurricular activities, as

opposed to those students who did not participate, on GPA performance. Physical activity allowed students to enhance their senses, thereby, enhancing their ability to understand the world around them.

Similarly, athletic participation also plays a role in academic endeavors (Yeung, 2013). With many young adults participating in sports, it is essential to understand whether the impact is positive or negative on academic outcomes. Yeung (2013) conducted a study on the athletics on academic outcomes and included the themes of theoretical motivation, athletics and achievement, athletic leadership, and athletics in urban schools. The High School and Beyond (HSB) survey was used to determine cognitive development on the basis of participation in varsity athletics. The results indicated that athletic participation was positively correlated with academic achievement. A positive correlation between athletic leadership and exam performance was noted (Yeung, 2013). The researcher stated "In line with the overwhelming preponderance of findings in the literature, participation in high school sports does appear to have beneficial effects" (Yueng, 2013, p. 380). Yueng (2013) did suggest that further research is needed, specifically qualitative research to more fully understand the mechanisms behind the relationship between academic achievement and athletics.

If physical development does play a role in academic achievement, then studies outside of the United States should indicate a positive correlation as well. In a study of elite athletes in Australia and the relationship with academic achievement, the researchers (Georgakis, Evans, & Warwick, 2015), examined the relationship between Higher School Certificates (HSC) results over an eleven year span (2001 to 2011). The study focused on aggregated data for 15 subjects, gender, and sport. The results, similar to Akos (2006)

and Yueng (2013), found a positive relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement, including participants scoring equal or better to non-athlete peer groups Georgakis et al., 2015).

Even though participation in athletics remains correlational, not causal with academic achievement, part of the reason behind the relationship might be the effect of athletics on social, emotional, and ethical development. If the associated developmental factors do contribute to higher academic achievement, then the effect of sports on non-academic developments, might play a significant role. This relationship might indicate a secondary association, yet still remain influential.

To reference the idea of social impact, Hoye, Nicholson, and Brown (2012) conducted a study on the relationship between social connectedness and athletics. To highlight an unusual aspect of the study, Hoye et al. (2012) also studied the relationship between non-athletic organizations and social connectedness. The researchers (Hoye et al., 2012) indicated from the results that social connectedness was enhanced by athletic associations, but interestingly, not by non-athletic associations.

Emotional impact was also considered in a study on sport participation and student well-being (Ruseski, Humphreys, Hallman, Wicker, and Breuer, 2014). The authors highlighted the notion that participation in athletics promotes a greater degree of physical health. These healthy outcomes were then measured to determine the relationship on happiness and well-being. The study was conducted in Rheinberg, Germany, using the Gaber-Hader approach. A sample size of 1,526 participants were used for the survey. The researchers surmised, based on the results that participation in sports lead to a greater degree of life-happiness (Ruseski et al., 2012). The study was

conducted with adults, rather than children, potentially indicating that sports is not only

for the school aged student, but should be considered a life-long endeavor to promote a

greater degree of happiness (Ruseski et al., 2012).

The third possible contributing factor might be the association of physical

development and moral and ethical development. Recently, media outlets have

emphasized the connection between morally deviant behaviors and athletics, including

the relative high association of crime activity and professional athletics (Nielsen, 2014).

The author highlights the distinction between "win at all cost athletics," (para. 3) and

participatory athletics. Rather than focusing on the entire body of athletics, Nielsen

(2014) choose to balance the focus by including high school, club, and non-revenue

generating athletics. Nielsen (2014) concluded from the findings that healthy moral

development is associated with athletics, when the cultural aspects of positive moral

development out-weigh the philosophy that winning is the end goal. This relationship is

based on the premise that athletics promotes autonomy and independence, and when

associated with positive emotional states and moral direction, the impact is positive

overall leading to the highest level of moral functioning (Nielsen, 2014). As a result,

schools should concentrate on moral development by deemphasizing winning, and focus

on a well-rounded culture (Nielsen, 2014).

Dewey (1897) regularly connects physical actions with overall human

development. Dewey believes that education is cultivated through the participation and

interests of the child. He expands the idea of active participation, as a child's own

physical skill sets are critical in the formalization of individual development, and

although brain research was limited during Dewey's time, he mentions the unconscious development of a child starting immediately upon birth.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was based on Dewey's (1897; 1902; 1909; 1916) philosophy that intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development should be prioritized in intentional educational practices with a substantial level of depth. Any of the five developments should naturally reinforce the other four developments. Based on the research of self-reinforcing effects (Akos, 2006; Goleman, 1996; Georgakis et al., 2015; Juvonen 2007; Niehaus et al., 2012; Nielsen, 2014; Rüppel et al., 2015; Simpson and Sacken, 2015; Suldo et al., 2009; Zullig et al., 2011; Vidourek et al., 2011), the literature seemed to reinforce Dewey's conceptual framework; however, the findings are correlational in nature given the methodology of the studies.

The evaluation of each of the five developments was based on six levels of depth using the Cognitive Process Dimension based on a revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). The six levels of the Cognitive Process dimension consist of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

In conjunction with the positive developmental factors, negative effects were also present based on the *Big Eight* social identifiers. In this study, the negative associations based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status were referred to and referenced. The inequalities associated with these factors were considered to have a negative impact on the intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development of students, and thereby affect school culture. Moreover, the framework was based on the idea that positive intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development effect both

individual student development and school culture in a positive way. In contrast, negative development of the five developmental factors were considered to have a negative effect on student development and school culture.

The rationale for the conceptual framework was to provide a baseline of educational practices beyond just academic endeavors. Dewey's body of work provided for a developmental theme that was used to develop the interview questions. In addition to the themes, a revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy will be used to give the themes the level of a level of depth necessary to critical review the substance of the interviews. In addition to the positive developments, inhibitory factors will also be studied.

Conclusion

Chapter II focused on the history of education in the United States and how our own past has shaped our present (Urban & Wagoner, 1996). American society continued to evolve, therefore, principals had to evolve their conceptual understanding of educational philosophy and practices as well. Principals typically develop a mission and vision for the future, so Dewey has provided educators with a theoretical framework that includes the intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development of each child. Also, educators are encouraged to understand the philosophical practices to minimize and overcome racism, sexism, and classism. The ideals of developing a positive culture, by the promotion of positive attributes such as dignity and respect, along with the recognition of destructive factors that inhibit growth, such as racism, sexism, and classism were also discussed.

The history of education in the United States have provided us with some of our greatest ideals, such as education for all children, yet remnants of our past have also

perpetuated our own limitations, such as racism, sexism, and classism (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). The foundation of American philosophy, was that prosperity and equality are God given rights, yet, still disparity exists today (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). It has been recognized in both private education, through the development of the Big Eight social identifiers, and in public schools with the creation of programs such as NCLB and Race to the Top campaigns. During the interview process, I hoped to identify themes that highlight successful vision and mission, and practices that attempt to ensure equality and opportunity for all.

In the attempt to create schools with vision and mission, educators are asked to focus on the impact of identifiers that divide our schools, such as racism, sexism, and classism. The impact of oppression is detrimental to the development of a child (Freire, 1971). Freire (1971) highlighted the importance of ensuring equality, but the intentional social and emotional attributes that must exist to help a student lift themselves from the shackles of oppression. In my study, I hope to identify intentional practices and programs that address specifically racism, sexism, and classism.

The connection between Dewey's educational philosophy, and the research reviewed and highlighted in Chapter II, inferred a correlation between positive non-academic outcomes, such as social connectedness, positive affect, ethical behavior, and health, and academic achievement. Given the nature of the work, causality cannot be confirmed, but the correlations infer a connection between positive non-academic attributes and academic success. In my study, I hoped to identify specific practices used by private school principals that relate to the positive attributes of social connectedness, student well-being, ethical behavior, and health, as it relates to academic achievement.

The selection of methodology was essential in creating a meaningful study. Given the complexity of individual human development and cultural development, I tried to narrow my study to ensure proper scope and depth. The research questions were kept to a minimum and focused on individual student development and cultural development. The design was a phenomenological, qualitative study, which was used to understand the essence of human development and interactions, while striving to minimize any preconceptions I had developed. Given the importance of researcher insight, as to give meaning to the data, I feel my current position as a middle school principal was essential to understanding the intricacies highlighted by the interview participants. The selection of the participants was narrowed to private middle school principals from The Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS). All these schools go through a rigorous accreditation process outlined by The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). I did my best to diversify the participants. The data was collected in accordance with professional standards, ensuring the security and disposal were maintained at all times. An analysis of the data using phenomenological reduction was done. The outline was based on Moustakas' (1994) and Creswell's (2014) methodologies. I referred to Saldaña (2013) and Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007) during the coding process. I feel a phenomenological, qualitative study, allowed me the depth necessary to determine the connection between successful academic student development and school culture and the role that non-academic attributes, such as school connectedness, emotional well-being, ethical behavior, and physical health plays in that development. Also, the ways in which private middle school principals minimize detrimental factors of racism, sexism, and classism was considered.

CHAPTER III

Method

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into private middle school principal perceptions and experiences on educational culture and individual student development. Educational Culture included school connectedness and inclusive social practices based on the "Big Eight" social identifiers outlined by the Independent School Diversity Network (ISDN). Individual student development included intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development. Public school information was used in the study based on the significant research contribution in regards to school culture, inclusive practices and structures, and individual student development. Understanding the issues facing public education may benefit private middle school principals due to the limited degree of diversity in private school populations. Public school structures and articles were used to help bridge the gap although public school principals will not be interviewed directly. The common components of school missions, philosophies, and ethos of private and public schools might allow for some commonalities and understanding. By conducting this research, I hoped to better understand the impact of educational culture and individual student development on intellectual success.

In Chapter III, I described the method I used to collect the data, and how these data were interpreted to answer the research questions. Johnson and Christensen (2012) described a qualitative researcher as "A researcher who focuses on exploration, description, and sometimes the generation and construction of theories using qualitative data" (p. 18). Specifically, Chapter III was divided in eight sections; (a) research

questions, (b) research design, (c) context of the study, (d) selection of site, (e) selection of participants, (f) instrumentation, (g) data collection, and (h) data analysis.

I presented my proposal defense in the fall of 2015. Upon approval, I submitted a research request form to the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) asking permission to conduct my study of human subjects in an individual interview format. The approval was accepted as I received formal approval from the IRB. I then sought out participants for my study who are private school principals in southeast, Texas.

Research Questions

The following research question will guide my study:

(a) What are private middle school principals' perceptions on educational culture and individual student development; and (b) What are the experiences of private middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual student development?

Research Design

A phenomenological study was used to understand the essence of human interactions and lived experiences provided by the participants in the study with the goal of entering the inner world of the participant to gain his or her many perspectives on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christenson, 2012, Moustakas, 1994). My study consisted of a collective phenomenology to describe the experiences of private middle school principals to understand their perspectives on educational culture and student development. A phenomenology was an appropriate research method because I analyzed the perspectives and experiences of private middle school principals who were

responsible for the educational culture and individual student development in their respective schools.

Edward Husserl, a German mathematics and philosopher, constructed the phenomenological philosophy, based on Descartes' attempts to remove all assumptions from philosophy (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research includes common themes: (a) studying individual's lived experiences, (b) viewing the experiences as whole, rather than parts, (c) the search for meaning through first-person accounts, and (d) the imperative nature of experience (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach was appropriate for this qualitative study because the research will be focused on the perceptions of private school principals.

To distinguish the transcendental phenomenological research method from other qualitative approaches (i.e., ethnography, grounded theory, hermeneutics, empirical phenomenology research, and heuristics), Moustakas' (1994) initial approach when using a phenomenological research study was to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment or presupposition. According to Moustakas (1994), meaning is created when an object appears in our consciousness: "what appears in consciousness is an absolute reality while what appears to the world is a product of learning," (p. 27). The ability to suspend judgement allows one to remain in a more conscious state of understanding (Moustakes, 1994).

In developing greater understanding of the participants' meaning of their experiences, Moustakas (1994) suggested using intuition and imagination by the researcher. The researcher could best accomplish greater understanding by focusing on

perceptions and feelings experienced. The practice of perceptual understanding is consistent with Husserl's philosophy of intuition over deduction.

As proposed by Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenological investigations are bound to the concept of intentionality and has three methodological steps: (a) the Epoche, (b) phenomenological reduction, and (c) imaginative variation. Initially, epoche allows the researcher to disclose his own feelings or experiences to avoid prejudgment. One way to accomplish this methodology is through the use of *bracketing*, a practice the researcher uses to suspend his or her "preconceptions or learned feelings about a phenomenon" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 384). Transcendental phenomenological reduction is the second step in Moustakas's (1994) model, and describes the essence of the event. Transcendental phenomenological reeducation is defined my Moustakas (1994) as a singular event, described in totality, leads us back to the source by focusing on the meaning of the event. In imaginative variation, the researcher's goal is to deduce the essence from a structural point of view (Moustakas, 1994). Themes emerge in the Moustakes' process when the phenomenon and meaning of the research questions are recorded and simultaneously analyzed. Through discourse, knowledge is constructed (Moustakes, 1994).

The unit of analysis in my study were the perceptions of private middle school principals. These principals are currently in leadership positions at private middle schools in southeast, Texas. By participating in individual interviews, these principals will share their perceptions about school culture and student development. Based on these principals' perceptions during the interviews, I identified and described the factors that foster positive school culture and successful student development.

In phenomenological studies, concerns have been raised over the type of data a researcher might obtain in an individual one-to-one interview format (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) identified four limitations to this approach including indirect information provided by interviewees; interview conducted in a designated location rather than natural setting, researcher's presence may bias responses; and not all people are articulate and perceptive. Creswell (2014) concluded despite the limitations, a number of advantages are also recognized including usefulness when direct observation is not possible; participants can describe historical information; and researcher has control over line of questioning.

All private middle school principals included in the study will belong to the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS). In an effort to ensure similar results (Creswell, 2014), each participant will be carefully selected, and similar results among interviews was expected due to interview protocol. In my study, I will use Creswell (2014) data analysis in qualitative research protocol to achieve optimal results. I used Creswell's six-step process; including (a) Step 1 -- organizing and preparing data for analysis, (b) Step 2 – read or look at all the data, (c) Step 3 – code the data, (d) Step 4 – generate themes for analysis, (e) Step 5 – advance themes for representation, and (f) Step 6 – interpretation of data, to identify differences and similarities that helped me to answer my research questions, particularly in regards to successful school culture and individual student development. The six steps outlined by Creswell were used to achieve the essence of a phenomenological reduction by systematically collecting, reviewing, coding the data that lead to the generation of themes. The themes will then be analyzed to generate over-arching themes. Finally, the macro themes will be interpreted to derive

understanding of the events of the phenomenon of educational culture and individual student development.

Role of Researcher

According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), the researcher acts as a "detective" (p. 266). Researchers using qualitative methods use the information to draw inferences or seek out causes and effects described by participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In general, the researcher should use a wide variety of strategies to "eliminate rival explanations or hypothesis" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 266).

When conducting a qualitative study, self-evaluation of the researcher's preparedness to engage in the study must be considered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicated *theoretical sensitivity* is "the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (p. 42). The personal and professional experiences, according to the authors (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), are an indicator of credibility.

After reflecting upon my level of theoretical sensitivity, I believe my personal and professional experiences prepared me for the research to be conducted. I believe my personal experience correlates appropriately with the intended research. As a child, I struggled in school and did not enjoy the educational experience. My parents, with five children, grew up in modest conditions; my father working in a factory and mother working at a bank. Neither parent graduated from college nor did either parent overemphasize the importance of education, other than passing grades. Given my own

personal struggles, I feel this experience added insight into the difficulties many students face.

Despite these factors, over the course of time, I learned to appreciate education from an intellectual perspective once I attended college. This renewed appreciation was the impetus to my professional experience. This process included the study of sociology, psychology, philosophy, biological brain research, and educational leadership as part of my training. After graduating with my Master's and Bachelor's Degree in Education from The Ohio State University, I have spent the last 19 years in education, including 11 years as a private middle school principal.

My personal experience and professional background are substantial indicators of my preparedness for this research. As a life-long learner, I have committed myself to understanding the complexity of human development and societal development. As part of this process, I am currently enrolled in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at Sam Houston State University in The Woodlands, Texas.

Although my educational endeavors have shaped my life in a positive fashion, these endeavors may have also shaped potential biases. My entire experience as a student has only been in public education, and my entire teaching and administrative experience has been in private education. Given my own educational background is a mixture of private and public education; this experience may potentially influence my perspective, and hence cause me to make overly positive or negative judgements. Using the epoche technique (Moustakes, 1994), I will seek to disclose my own feelings or experiences to avoid and possible prejudgments.

Selection of Participants

A series of decisions must be considered when choosing participants for a study (Creswell, 2014). Participants should be purposefully selected to help the researcher understand the problem and answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014). When considering participants, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested considering four aspects: (a) the setting, (b) the actors, (c) the events, and (d) the process. Using the Miles and Huberman (1994) method, the follow participants will be as follows. Each participant was (a) identified as serving in an ISAS school, (b) a private middle school principal, and (c) a facilitator of school culture and individual student development.

To ensure a diverse group of participants, selection will be varied based on gender, age, religion, and ethnicity. Each of the five participants were employed by their particular school for a minimum of three years. The goal will be to achieve "saturation" (Creswell, 2014, p.189). Saturation is reached when new insights or fresh data can no longer be obtained (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

Given that I used a phenomenological inquiry based study, I was the main instrument in the study. Included in this section will be the role of the researcher. Furthermore, details regarding my own potential biases will also be explained.

When the inquirer is involved in the study, this practice can introduce uncertainties into the study including personal, ethical, and strategic issues (Creswell, 2014). As a result of these issues, the inquirer should explicitly express any values or personal beliefs that may result in biases (Creswell, 2014). These biases may result in the

researcher pre-determining themes, actively looking to support these themes, and create favorable results about the study (Creswell, 2014).

I needed to be careful not to bias my study in regards to the collection and analysis of the data based my personal feelings on the topic. One of the reasons I choose Dewey's philosophy as a theoretical model was due to my own personal belief that intellectual development can be furthered by the development of social, emotional, ethical, and physical skills. During the interview phase, it was imperative to use non-leading questions when interviewing participants and guard against developing themes that reinforce my own perceptions.

Data Collection

Based on my selection of participant criteria, I selected Private Middle School Principals with whom I conducted interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to collect rich and meaningful detailed information about student culture and individual student development. Each Private Middle School Principal was interviewed; each interview lasted from 45 minutes to one hour. Upon review of the interview, follow-up communication will be conducted to allow the participant to add, modify, or clarify any part of the statement he or she made.

The individual interviews took place in the principals' offices. It was essential the interviews are conducted in a secure and confidential space. The interviews were semi-formal and audio-recorded into an encrypted audio file. The audio interviews were recorded to an iPhone. The recordings were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document by Rev. As part of security protocol at Rev, all transcriptionists are required to sign non-disclosure agreements. Furthermore, both the audio recordings and word documents

were maintained in an encrypted file on my personal Windows computer using the

Encrypted File System (EFS) and were secured so no one else will have access to my

computer. Upon completion of the dissertation, all transcriptions, recordings, and

documents will be deleted and shredded.

The individual interview protocol (See Appendix) consisted of seven key

questions. Based on the answers to these questions, follow-up questions were considered

as highlighted as sub-level topics. The purpose of the first two key questions was to

gather substantial information about school culture, including the intellectual, social,

emotional, ethical, and physical characteristics. The next two questions were intended to

obtain information about the student individual development, including intellectual,

social, emotional, ethical, and physical development. The next question addressed

constraints that make it difficult to achieve a positive school culture and individual

student development. The final question allowed the interviewee to express any

additional insights into positive school culture and successful student development.

Specifically, the overall goal was to identify specific endeavors that promote a positive

and healthy school culture, successful holistic student development, and any practices

that create a positive inclusive environment through a series of specific questions. The

description of the transition question and the key questions of the individual protocol,

together with their rationales and types are stated in Table I in the Appendix.

Data Analysis

I used the phenomenological reduction outlined by Moustakas (1994) and

Creswell's (2014) six-step process as the basis of my analysis. For specific coding

techniques, I referred to Saldaña (2013) and Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007). The coding

process in qualitative research was done by identifying symbolized words or phrases (Saldaña, 2013). These phrases should be "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). The words and phrases were separated into sentences and small phrases for consideration as a data layout technique, including pre-coding and jottings techniques (Saldaña, 2013). A heightened emotion or particular emphasis described by participant was included in the pre-coding.

In qualitative data analysis, the purpose of pattern detection is constructed through the developed of interpreted meaning by the researcher of these words or phrases (Saldaña, 2013). The meaning was constructed in linking the data to an idea of theme (Saldaña, 2013). Because a majority of qualitative researchers' code data is part of the actual process, as well as after the process, the practice of coding becomes part of the analysis (Saldaña, 2013). I used coding patterns, filters, and heuristic technique to best derive meaning from the coding process. The heuristic technique, from the Greek, meaning "to discover," (Saldaña, 2013, p. 8) is a problem-solving technique, free from algorithms or formulas. Once the coding is complete, I categorized the coding to try to develop further categories. After the categories were formalized, I then compared the categories to the theoretical framework outlined by Dewey.

Word count is the second method I used to analyze the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This method was based on the premise, all people have unique word usage and distinctive vocabulary (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This method contends the more important the theme, the more often people will use related words to describe the theme (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are three reasons for counting themes: (a) identification of patterns; (b)

verification of hypothesis; and (c) maintain analytic integrity. Hence, I collected and count words or phrases to determine the relative importance of the data by the frequency of occurrence.

Because multiple individuals participated in the study, I looked for emerging ideas, categories, themes that develop among multiple participants. I also looked for contrasting ideas and theories among the participants. The goal is to reach a level of saturation among the participants in the study during the interview, after the interview, and during the member-checking phase.

Trustworthiness

According to Creswell (2014), verification, trustworthiness, and authenticity are typical terms used in quantitative research, and need to be used cautiously when referring to qualitative research. Rather, Creswell (2014) prefers the term "validation" (p. 250) as a replacement term for these convention words. Validation has a distinct strength in qualitative research that allows for a level of closeness to the participants by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). This closeness then allows for a heightened level of accuracy or value (Creswell, 2014).

On way to develop a level of trustworthiness is to use member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The member-checking technique has many advantages. Member checking advantages include, better understanding and evaluation of the meaning of the participants, gives participant an opportunity to review statements and make corrections, allows for additional information to be added, and the ability of the researcher to summarize data for the participant. An informal member-checking technique was used in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking does have its disadvantages as

well, including if researcher and participant disagree on meaning, participants struggle to understand overview of results, and members forget what they said during the interview. When problems arose, I used the interpreted perspective in an attempt to co-create meaning based on the statements in the initial interview as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Given the potential advantages, I used member checking to ensure the most comprehensive and meaningful understanding of the data.

Researcher Credibility

Given my current position as a middle school head in Independent Schools Association of the Southwest, I reached out to colleagues who were willing to be interviewed for my study. According to Creswell (2014), gatekeepers are individuals who will allow a researcher in to an institution to conduct research. Gatekeepers might be a Headmaster or Board of Trustee who will allow the interview to be conducted. Six gatekeepers, Headmasters, allowed me to interview their Heads of Middle School. I scheduled a 1-hour interview session with six middle school principals with the goal of reaching data saturation (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012); five were able to participate. Each interview was recorded for coding. Prior to the actual interviews, I attempted to ensure a relationship was cultivated

I took notes in a journal during the individual interviews, and after I completed the interviews, I used the notes as part of a data triangulation process during the analysis stage. Collecting field and reflective notes in a field journal allows the researcher to clarify the contribution of informants during the interviews, and thus, enhance the credibility of the study (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Transferability

Transferability, commonly referred to external validity, is the degree that the findings in a study can be generalized to other settings, specific populations, or an entire population (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). Although transferability is an important aspect of quantitative studies, the very nature of qualitative research limits its effectiveness (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). Given in qualitative research, the participants are typically selected, and random sampling is the best mechanism for ensuring generalizability, there is an inherent flaw in the sampling population (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). Also, specific attributes among a small population are typically focused on to create richness in most qualitative research (Johnson & Christenson, 2012). In particular, the nature of qualitative research focuses on the development of themes, not necessarily in generalizing answers to themes (Creswell, 2014).

However, generalization is not impossible to achieve in context, as Yin (2009) understood when considering the development of broader theories. If a researcher is replicating or expanding upon a similar current theory, provided the research uses diligent procedures, the theory used can be generalized further (Creswell, 2014). The process does require strict protocols to be followed and monitored (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of my study was to confirm or enhance Dewey's theoretical framework, but not to generalize the specific findings to other settings or populations.

Ethical Considerations

One of the most critical aspects when working with humans is the ethical treatment of the participants (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christenson, 2012). It is so important The American Educational Research Association (AERA) has developed a set

of guidelines and standards for educational researchers (AERA, 1992). The AERA

general outline includes these guiding standards: responsibilities to the field; research

populations, educational institutions, and the public; intellectual ownership; editing

reviewing, and appraisal research; sponsors, policy makers, and other users of research;

and students and student researchers.

I used a five step approach to ensure the protection of the participants in the study

based on the work of Creswell (2014). Prior to conducting the study, I consulted the code

of ethics for my area, submitted IRB approval to Sam Houston State University,

identified local approval needed from each institution, minimized power issues, and gave

credit for work done on the study. At the beginning of the study, I conducted a needs

assessment, contacted participants to inform them in regards to the general nature of the

study, informed participants their participation was optional, identified and respected any

important cultural aspects of the school, and obtained appropriate consent. During the

study, I looked to build trust, discussed purpose of study, assured the participants they

may end participation at any time during the study, avoided leading questions, and stayed

as close to questions stated in interview protocol as possible. Once the research was

completed, I analyzed the data reporting multiple perspectives, reported ambiguous or

contrary findings, and assigned generic names to protect participant identity. Finally, I

reported, shared, and stored data using APA guidelines, unbiased language, and provided

copies of report to participants for consideration.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the method of my phenomenological study, based on

the work of Moustakas (1994), and designed to describe the experiences and beliefs of

private middle school principals on educational culture and student development. The study included five private middle school principals in southeast Texas. Each study was conducted with a private middle school principal who has been in a leadership position for a minimum of three years, part of ISAS, and is a facilitator of school culture and student development. I used Creswell's (2014) six-step qualitative process for optimal results, including coding techniques by Saldaña (2013) and word count techniques by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007). In each of the interviews, coding techniques were used during and post interview. I then follow-up with each participant, using member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to ensure trustworthiness. Finally, I used results from coding procedures to develop categories. These categories developed into themes, and finally were compared to the theoretical framework based on Dewey's philosophy.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how private middle school principals perceive and experience educational cultural and student development. An in-depth investigation of the perceptions and experiences of principals included reflections on the critical factors of successful student development and the connection to school culture. As such, understanding the perceptions and experiences of private school principals on the topic of culture and student development can serve as framework for further discussion among educators interested in whole-child philosophy.

Two research questions that guided my study were as follows:

1. What are private middle school principals' perceptions on educational culture and individual student development?

2. What are the experiences of private middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual student development?

Principals from private independent schools, associated with the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest, were informed of the research I intended to conduct and were invited to participate by personal meeting or phone conversation. All of the participants elected for personal visits. Consent forms were distributed and signed by the participants. All participants were over the age of 18, thus allowing for individual consent without further procedures. Five principals participated in a qualitative study, which included face-to-face interviews approximately 45 minutes to an hour in length.

Chapter IV begins with Step 1 of the Data Analysis, the Epoche. Prior to the analysis of private middle school principal participant interviews, the transcript of the interview was sent back to the participants for clarification and confirmation. Chapter IV included the bracketing phase, the phenomenological reduction phase, and the imaginative variation phase. The following sections describe the phases in detail. The bracketing phase allowed me to set aside my preconceptions or learned feelings regarding child development and cultural understanding, and focus solely on the participant responses and insights. The phenomenological reduction phase included participant responses to each of the interview questions in sequential order, with a series of follow-up questions to ensure clarification and meaning. For example, I introduced the first interview question on school mission and then I probed significant statements from the five participants to ensure the first question was completely articulated by the participants. This process was repeated for each of the interview questions. After the phenomenological reduction phase, I proceeded to the imaginative variation phase in which I discussed themes that emerged and possible structural elements. The clustering of emergent themes allowed me to identify what structural developments were essential in individual student development, what type of cultural produces the best results, how over-lapping developments allowed for increased success, and which constituency groups needed to be involved. Imbedded within this framework is the level of depth required to best promote successful development for individual students and school culture. Finding commonalities within the problem statement and literature review to the emerging themes allowed a potential framework to be developed, which is discussed the findings in Chapter IV. Chapter IV concludes with the conclusion and summary of the findings.

Epoche

As described in Chapter III, I followed the procedures suggested by Moustakas (1994) to clarify my perceptions on individual student development and cultural impact by adhering to Moustakas' three conceptual phases: (a) bracketing, (b) phenomenological reduction, and (c) imaginative variation. In bracketing, I set aside my preconceived opinions and sought out to record only participant responses as the participants intended. Phenomenological reduction allowed me to delve deeply into participant statements, by asking clarifying questions to help derive the meaning of the statement. Imaginative variation allowed me to take the meaningful statements from the participants and develop themes, by which knowledge and a potential framework were constructed.

Bracketing. Epoche allows a researcher to disclose one's personal feelings on a topic. Bracketing, a practice a researcher can use to protect against bias and preconceived notions, requires a researcher to consider the data by minimizing preconceptions or learned feelings. To set aside my preconceptions proved to be difficult due to my background in psychology, sociology, philosophy, and brain research, including 19 years of teaching and 11 years as a Head of Middle School. My own knowledge and experience with human development and cultural structure on my campus and at other independent schools has reinforced my belief in this approach. As to not taint the research process, the bracketing process was implemented. I incorporated the bracketing approach, which means turning one's attention, with significant focus, "on the textural qualities, feelings, sense experiences, and thoughts" (Moustakes, 1994. p. 78). This allowed me to remain conscious in my act of "thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting, in order to arrive at core structural meanings" (Moustakes, 1994. p. 78). A

self-reflexive analysis allowed me to identify my beliefs, bias, and preconceived framework so that I was able to proceed with an untainted mind towards the participant interviews. Throughout the study, I remained vigilant.

Phenomenological reduction. The idea of finding the true meaning of the event through understanding of the event in totality. As part of this phenomenological process, horizonalization, delimited horizons or meanings, invariant qualities and themes, individual textual descriptions, and composite textual descriptions can be used to better understand the meaning of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Horizonalization is the process by which every statement is given equal value. Delimited horizons or meanings, the horizons stand out as invariant qualities. Invariant qualities and themes allow one to identify non-repetitive, non-overlapping constituents clustered into themes. Individual textural descriptions highlight the integration of the invariant textural constituents and themes of each participant. Finally, the composite textural description involves the integration of all the themes into a universal description. Later in Chapter IV, I will describe how this process lead to the themes and potential framework.

Imaginative variation. Imaginative variation follows phenomenological reduction with the objective to understand the structural essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). From this process, the structural essence can be described and understood (Moustakas, 1994). The clustering of themes, as noted later in Chapter IV, helps to understand the basic themes that underlie student success and the cultural structure required to best ensure a reinforcing environment that promotes the over-lapping themes.

Individual Principal Participant Interviews

To conduct personal interviews, I first contacted the head of school to request permission to conduct an interview with their Head of Middle School. Out of the eight schools, I received permission from six Heads of School. I then contacted each middle school principal by email with an attached letter of consent. The email and letter of consent explained the purpose of the study, as well as pertinent information regarding confidentiality. The consent letter also highlighted information regarding the participant interviews, safety measures, and logistics of the study. Upon receiving the signed letters of consent, I coordinated times in which a purposeful interview could be conducted in person. Each of the six participants selected times that would not impact their current professional or personal schedules. I made travel arrangements to visit each of the participants, ensuring I was prompt and dressed according to school expectations. I had one participant choose to interview at my school and another had to drop out for undisclosed reasons, reducing the total number of participants to five. Using a smart phone application called Voice Memos, I was able to record each conversation in its entirety. Each recording was then sent to Rev, a paid online transcription service. The Rev Service maintained confidentiality and was highly efficient, usually completing the transcriptions within 48 hours.

The first recorded interview took place on January 15, 2016 at 9:10 a.m. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and provided an illuminating starting point for the interviews. Over the course of two months, all five participant interviews were conducted and recorded. The individual interviews were recorded and transcribed separately and the transcriptions were coded for emerging themes. The interviews during

the first cycle of coding remained independent (Saldaña, 2013). Complexity and connection between the interviews were highlighted during the second phase of coding. Each interview had a unique and distinct focus, based on the starting point of the participant's mission statement that aided in the individuality of interview. Only after the interview process was complete and the first round of coding was done, did I begin to compare and consolidate the connecting themes; as described in the second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2013).

Protecting the identity of the principal participants was explicit in every facet of the process. Each participant and school was given an ambiguous designation to fulfill the confidentiality criterion for the project, such as participant 1 and school 1. On occasion, the participant would identify themselves in the recorded interview. Once returned, I would change the names of the participant and the school to the designated ambiguous designation. Additionally, principal participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed verbatim, but the changes would be made as part of the process. Each participant was aware of the procedures set in place for the interview phase of the study.

Participant one is the Head of Middle at an elite independent school in Southeast, Texas. She has been employed by the school for the last 13 years. Participant one earned her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees.

Participant two is the Head of Middle at an elite all-girls Catholic school in Southeast, Texas. He has been in education for 19 years and Head of Middle School for the last four years. Participant two earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree and Master of Arts Degree in Education.

Participant three is the Head of Middle at an elite independent, international school in Southeast, Texas. He has been a Head of Middle School for the last 27 years and is finishing his 35 years in education this year. Participant three earned his Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees.

Participant four is the Head of Middle at an elite Baptist school in Southeast, Texas. He has been involved in education for the last 13 years and three years as Head of Middle School. Participant four earned his Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Doctorate in Education degrees.

Participant five is the Head of Middle at an elite Baptist school in Southeast, Texas. She has 17 years of experience in education and nine years as a Head of Middle School. As an aside, Participant five earned her Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and currently working towards of Master of Education degree.

Interview question 1. In Question 1, I asked each participant to describe their school's mission, philosophy, and vision statement. I asked each participant to clarify how they go about fulfilling the mission's objectives. Many commonalties were found across the schools of the five participants. A significant common response amongst the Heads of Middle School was the importance each school placed on the regular review and inclusion of the mission statement and philosophy into their decision-making process.

Participant one began by reading her mission statement. She discussed academic excellence, personal responsibility and growth, and fulfilled potential. Participant one mentioned a number of items that interrupt the progression of the mission, including too much homework, fixed schedules, athletic, fine art, and academic conflicts. In her quote,

she referenced the importance of the school's mission statement, "We think about our mission very often." Following that quote, she followed up with this statement in regards to the mission, "We tend to want to think about academics, the arts and athletics- those three pillars. We always say that character and citizenship are embedded within those." She finished the statement by discussing the importance of parent and faculty communication in regards to understanding the purpose and mission of the school.

Participant two started by naming the school's five stated goals articulated in the mission statement. He highlighted the importance of intellectual values, social awareness, community service, personal growth, and a personal faith in God in an atmosphere of freedom. Participant two mentioned how the school uses community to discuss kindness and compassion. He also discussed the importance of diversity. In his quote, he referenced the importance of diversity being a Christian school, "We've done Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur … We're looking more for that spiritual component, more so maybe than the religious component."

Participant three started by stating the basic components of the mission statement. He highlighted the importance of a "world class" challenging and nurturing environment, international and cultural diversity, and the importance of active learning. Participant three mentioned how the school uses school trips to foster an active, inclusive environment. In his quote, he referenced the importance of diversity, "This really very dynamic focus on and some pretty important expectations about the appreciation of diversity, really all kinds of diversity." He felt the school was able to achieve its mission, being an international school, with this intentional approach.

Participant four started by stating, "The idea is that every great organization knows their purpose. In the independent school world, we talk about our mission, we know our mission, and we run every decision through that mission." He highlighted the importance of the curriculum, pedagogical practices, field trips, faculty hiring, and student programs. Participant four mentioned how the school used the mission to cultivate an environment, "based on biblical truth, to foster a culture of developing students, who are able to participate in a diverse, global community." He felt the school was able to achieve its mission, through chapel services and student programs.

Participant five began by highlighting the length of the mission statement. She discussed the importance of a superior academic program and faith. Participant five mentioned how formative middle school is for students this age. In her quote, she referenced the importance of middle school, "They are figuring out who they are, and what their principles are, and what they believe versus what their parents believe." Following that quote, she followed up with this statement regarding character development as part of the mission, "Lots of schools talk about character development and have advisory programs. I just feel like we have a framework that keeps it relevant and at the forefront of our decisions."

Interview question 2. In Question 2, I asked each participant to share any initial thoughts on cultivating the mission of the school. Typically, each question was slightly modified based on the answers to question one. The commonalties included the importance placed on faculty professional development, parent communication, and intentional student experience to promote a culture of inclusivity and intentionality.

In response to Question 2, Participant one shared her feeling on parent communication "My question to the parents is always: why are you here? Well, we love the school, but what about the school do you love? If you love the school, then you know who we are." She pointed out the importance of knowing who you are as a school. Participant one finished with this statement, "I don't know if everyone is in alignment, every member of the community is in alignment with our mission, and that creates the challenge, right?" The statement highlights the importance of parent, student, and faculty alignment.

Participant two shared his feeling on student experience "We're trying to instill intellectual curiosity, love of learning. That's been a transformation the school continues to make as we've moved from being more teacher centered to student centered like a lot of schools are doing." He mentioned tinker tables, laptops, and integrated lessons. He finished his statement by discussing STEM and Project-Based Learning as a way to ensure student involvement and the importance of teacher training involved with both philosophical approaches.

Participant three also shared his opinions on student experience by highlighting the school trips and the intentionality of the programs. The school focuses on journaling, pre-trip sessions, and parent and faculty communication to accomplish these tasks. This cultural development was important to them; they are considering adding the trip to the report card. As he stated, the trip "has something that really is connected to the program and to make sure that parents are paying attention." In this way, the parents, faculty, and students all understand how the culture is developed through the trips program.

Participant four shared his feeling on fostering the faculty culture necessary to achieve the mission, "I'll start with the teachers. I think that what we are attempting to do and what we are seeing is to develop teachers that are not necessarily specialists, but that are generalists, that can think over multi-disciplines." He mentioned that the culture needs to consist of teachers who have a "growth mindset," and "believe in life-long learning."

Participant five shared her thoughts on cross-cultural competency, "What we mean with cross-cultural competency is the ability to understand that there are beliefs and practices and cultures that are different from your own, and to understand what is valuable in them." She also pointed out how teacher culture autonomy is cultivated. Participant five finished with this statement, "We have some wildly creative teachers, so just every time someone comes to me and says, "You might think this is crazy, but I want to do XY and Z" I just always say yes, just do it. If it's horrible, we'll fix it." The statement highlights the importance of parent, student, and faculty alignment.

Interview question 3. In Question 3, I asked participants to share thoughts on their role, as Head of Middle School, in developing students individually. Each participant in this study has played varying levels of roles in the promotion of individual student development on his or her campus. The common themes highlighted by the heads of middle school focused on the promotion of active, balanced learning across various modalities, including intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development. Also, given that four of the schools have a religious affiliation, spirituality would be and added theme in these schools.

Participant one shared her feelings on student balance and the structures she puts in place to balance conflicting needs such as the 8th grade musical and homework. "Every 8th grader participates (in the musical). We've balanced it in that we have three tiers. We have the gold team, the purple team and the white team, so it's based on your level of commitment." She points out that each teacher promotes their class or program, but unfortunately pay the price. She states the students invariable become emotionally overwhelmed, lose out on social interaction, and lose sleep. She stated, "Every day I was getting emails about the homework. The teachers are killing the kids." The importance of balance and the role she plays ensuring a balanced program was highlighted in this statement.

Participant two talked about accomplishing student goals. "I feel like this is our definition of whole child." He mentioned specific attributes he hopes to see cultivated based on this statement, "I think it gives us a platform to work off of when we're talking about the intellectual piece, particularly when we're talking about skill building and when we're trying to interact with others and collaborate and work with people that are maybe not going to be so easy to work with in group settings."

Participant three focused on the process of learning, rather than the result, to help students maintaining balance. He said, "It's been my mantra now for about 2 years. I understood it some, but it's become something that I've tried to be really consciously aware of." Participant three highlighted the overemphasis placed on grades and hoped that his influence might help create a culture of growth and effort. He specifies some the phrases he uses, "Wow, you really worked hard to get ready for this, didn't you?

Congratulations on the effort that you put in. Did you have to stay up late for that? I'm really proud of you for doing that. I never said a word about the grade."

Participant four focused on the school's predominant methodology of Harkness and the benefits it provides. He stated, "I think that what we're teaching students is that they have a voice, and their voice is important, and their contribution is needed. You're teaching students that their contribution should be valued in the greater whole." He mentioned that this methodology allows the student to develop social skills, empathy, critical-thinking skills, and ethical considerations. His profound statement of individual development leading to a healthy culture can be found in this quote, "Hopefully, we're leading to civilized students that can engage in a democratic endeavor, where they feel like everyone has a voice."

Participant five referenced the six Cs as a way to maintain whole-child philosophy; communication, creativity, collaboration, cross-cultural competency, critical thinking, and character. In regards to intentionality, she states "Are they being asked relevant questions, and to do authentic work?" She points out that this balanced philosophy requires a curriculum mapping and coordinators. In the end, the students produce five-paragraph essays, present oral presentations, collaborate making videos, think critically, and develop integrity and honesty.

Interview question 4. In Question 4, I asked each participant to describe diversity and the impact on the individual student. This question allowed the participants to describe the various form of diversity, including the diversity of thought. The diversity topics covered ranged from gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability.

Participant one shared her feelings on race. As an African-American female, I found her insights incredibly insightful. She reflects on a recent moment, "They're doing amazing. When I say an amazing job, we had a Martin Luther King Junior Assembly and we had students from lower school come over, we had a student from upper school sing, Lift Up Your Voice." She recounted how these moments can affect a single child, after she pointed how the student struggles academically,

> "When he got on stage and he recited the, I have a Dream speech, you got
>
> chills. You saw a talent in him and his peers saw a talent in him that may
>
> not have been explored in the classroom. For us, I think everyone will see
>
> him differently now."

She comments on how these moments allow each and every member of the school to be connected to the overall environment.

Participant two shared his insights into religious and ethnic diversity. Being a Catholic school, he talked about bridging the divide. Given a substantial portion of the population is not Catholic, he discussed the impact on the students and the current struggles involved in diversifying the school. He stated:

> We might have a Jewish kid or two. We might have a few Muslim kids.
>
> We might have a couple of Asian kids. We might have a couple Black
>
> kids. We hit a lot of groups, but they don't have a lot of people within their
>
> groups to identify with. At our faculty level, I mean, I've been able to
>
> diversify male female a little bit, but we're not very well diversified
>
> outside of that as well. That part we've struggled with a little bit"

He also said, "I think it can be hard on girls who have trouble identifying with others. If you're a Black girl and you don't relate well to White girls, then you're probably not going to do very well here." He mentioned that there needs to be a consciences effort to continue to diversify the school so all children feel welcome.

Participant three has the unique circumstance of having 60% cultural diversity in the school. This is the highest concentration of diversity among the participating schools, and the highest I have ever encountered. Participant three discussed the natural positive impact on the students. In his statement, "At (his school), if you choose us, you're going to get that (strong academics) plus this really dynamic focus on and some pretty important expectations about the appreciation of diversity, really all kinds of diversity." Here, he highlighted an appreciation in regards to diversity,

> Sometimes I say, I think that putting you in a math class with kids from
> Russia, Zimbabwe, Germany, Italy, as well as Houston makes you a better
> student. Well, why do you think so? What I'm trying to do is get them to
> appreciate that what we want is an open-minded kid who respects folks
> that are different.

He pointed out the role diversity plays in social and ethical development.

Participant four, much like participant two talked about the struggles of striving to become more diverse. He shared his feelings on socio-economic diversity, "If we were looking at socio-economic diversity, the school is located in a very affluent area. Tuition is high, and so right off the bat, we don't have a diverse population in terms of socio-economic status." He mentioned the individual impact as well "I think that's a difficult thing for any student that is of a non-Caucasian background, to feel that they fully are a

part of the community." He pointed out the need to improve both faculty and student diversity to help others feel connected and have a sense of well-being.

Participant five shared her thoughts on providing financial aid to promote socio-economic diversity. She stated, "Our socio-economic diversity we actually do pretty well with in terms of our financial aid and really taking care of our kids on financial aid, so that it's not clear who's on financial aid and who isn't." She pointed out how this practice neutralizes the negative emotional effects of economic disparity. She also speaks to religious diversity, "We are not a particularly appealing school to non-Christians. We have about two percent non-Christians, so not none, but there ... That's not even really part of the mission of the school to be religiously diverse." In her statement, she highlighted the need to be true to one's mission.

Interview question 5. In Question 5, I changed the questioning to focus on to the cultural impact of diversity. Moreover, I highlighted how diversity played a role in cultivating an environment by reinforcing intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development. The responses were profound and enlightening.

Participant one shared her feelings on her own experience with diversity, having an African-American daughter in lower school. She said "It's no easier for me. I have a little girl down the lower school, one of five African-American girls. No boys. It's not easy." She has a unique insight as a Head of Middle School and parent. She reflected on how she balances her roles, "I have to also think about how what I'm saying, how did that impact her and this community." In a profound statement, she highlighted the difference between adults and children when talking about diversity and the impact on culture, "What I realized is it's hard for us, as adults, to talk about it. The kids, it's not hard for

them. You give them the microphone and they go and they say some amazing things that we're afraid to let them say." She finished the conversation highlighting the freedom required for children to work through these issues and the discourse needed to have these discussions. She discussed the intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical understanding to keep an open-mind.

Participant two, located in the energy corridor, discussed how culture can be a product of your environment. Speaking to the international flavor of the school, he stated, "It's very European feel in some places, which is good." He mentioned the relatively new endeavor of focusing on diversity and how the recent presentation on Martin Luther King, Jr. will help, "Hey, we need to do this, and we need to figure out how to do it well so that it's not just an add-on, but it becomes part of what we're doing and what we learn."

Participant three spoke about teachers who were reluctant to diversity initiatives and the impact that reluctance had on the school. He stated, "We've had people who are less broadminded, and they have a, this or that, cultural personal bent which seems to restrict their ability to really appreciate the wider maybe spectrum of kids' behavior, perhaps, or cultural aspects of the families that we're working with". Then mentioning that these same teachers may have difficulty in diversity of thought, he said, "you have a teacher who isn't as good at appreciating pedagogical or methodological differences that might be mixed together in the experience of working here." Immediately, he followed it up with a cultural response,

> We did a really interesting faculty workshop about who we are and what
> we want to be, et cetera, going forward, and one of the things that the

teachers talked about really liking about working here was that it isn't a

school, which has one way of working and that there is the ability and the

flexibility within the school, within the administration.

Then summing it up, he talked about the constituency groups, "In this way, the parents,

faculty, and students all understand how the culture is developed through the program."

Participant four, highlighted the restriction in promoting diversity in a Baptist

school said,

The difficulty there is, there are families that, as soon as they see the word

Baptist in the name [of the school], are immediately going to say, That's

not for me, and sometimes that is a student from a different ethnicity other

than Caucasian in the area. We have that working against us.

With that said, he quickly shifted into the importance of fostering diversity, "If the

faculty were to become more diverse, would the student body become more diverse? I

think that it is difficult, certainly, for a student that is a minority, to really feel a part of

the school. I guess administratively, that is something that we need to address." He

finished the topic by saying, that we need to approach diversity on a variety of fronts,

including diverse thinking and the level of discourse and critical thinking the approach

provides.

Participant five talked about how intentional the school is to fostering diversity,

"Just in terms of reaching out to community groups, like the Jack and Jill, they meet on

our campus now starting this year. Get these people here. Our faculty need more

training." She also pointed out the benefits to a rich, inclusive culture by pointing out

multiple levels of diversity, including religious, racial, gender, and economic diversity.

Participant five finished with this statement on transgender diversity, "What we haven't tackled yet, although I keep telling people it's coming, is gender diversity in terms of kids who are transgendered, or on a gender spectrum instead of gender bifurcation."

Interview question 6. In Question 6, I asked about specific programs that relate to a fully articulated curriculum. Consistently, the participants referred to five distinct areas of development, intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development. For the four schools with the religious component, I would say the five developments were apparent along with spiritual growth. The participants also elaborated on the level of depth required in each of the areas of development, so the topics of knowledge, comprehension, application, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity were discussed.

Participant one, began by discussing student wellness, "I mean we talked about that (wellness) a lot. Mindfulness." She also pointed out the connection between mind and body, "We implemented yoga in our athletic department. They do that in their 7th grade HD course. We do mindfulness just throughout the school." She did hesitate on whether the students understand the value in the approach, "I don't know if the kids are really appreciative of that (yoga)." She went on to point out the value of reading, math, and science, school safety, empathy, physical health, connectedness, and accountability. She ended the question articulating her role in assuring balance, "I'm going to help you fix it. I may not fix it, but I'm going to help you to fix it."

Participant two discussed a variety of initiatives. He pointed out the importance of intellect, "What we're trying to do, is just increase that curiosity, that love of learning, rather than just learning for learning's sake." He mentioned the importance of social growth, "They [the students] will go to great lengths to help their neighbor be

successful." He spoke to an emotionally supportive environment, "kindness and how we treat each other." He imbedded both ethics and spirituality into the following statement, "It's building of community that has a Christian value." Finally, he spoke to the importance of having children up and active, "Just so they could spread out from the class, I added these standing stations."

Participant three discussed the importance of a challenging academic program, but at the same time qualified its importance when he said, "we don't focus directly or mention first the issue of academic achievement and challenge. I think that because we put other aspects of what's good or important about (school name) first." He references the idea social skills, emotional stability, and ethics and then says this, "I think it's a bad idea to focus on awards, honor rolls, and all those things too much, because it sets up kids for a sense of failure or a lack of achievement if that's what you focus on." He then goes on to discuss how parents and teachers should praise hard work, not the grade itself.

Participant four talks about the components of student success through the lens of the Harkness method. He explains that Harkness is a philosophy of teaching that is designed to be student-centered, focused on public discourse, in-depth discussions, emotional support, and intellectual understanding. He summed it up, "Students are, hopefully, seeing their academic experience as much more of a collective, much more of a collaborative experience, a humanizing experience, and not an individualized, competitive experience." He explained that it is not a free for all. Teacher remain engaged and continue to guide the discussion to ensure social skills, emotional empathy, and ethical discourse is fostered.

Participant five talked about the importance of depth and creativity. When she referenced creativity, she said, "Creativity is a mindset, rather than necessarily a skill set. Creativity I think is the hardest one for us, because our kids have been trained up in giving one right answer." She talked about the struggle due to the focus on grades and tests. Participant five then gave an example of what she is hoping for in fostering creativity and collaboration, "Just this past week our honors eighth grade English teacher decided to do a different approach with her study of Night and the holocaust. She gave her essential questions to the kids, and said, "Put yourselves in groups. Decide which one of these questions your group wants to pursue, and I'll see you in two days."

Interview question 7. In Question 7, I asked each participant to imagine a utopian school, and then describe it. This prompt allowed the participant to create a structure for educational excellence. One of the interesting aspects of the question was the reference to the themes pointed out in the first five questions. Typically, the answers revolved around what the school's perceived successes and the school's current struggles in promoting a particular topic or development.

Participant one started with the type of people in the school, "When I think of the people that would occupy it, I would like it to be an international occupancy; and that we were able ... not all, but we were able to expose all students to people who are different". She then included the diversity of race, socio-economics, religion, and gender as part of the collective. Participant one then shifted to a fully-articulated curriculum which focuses moving away from content to skill development. The skills included intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical skill building.

Participant two initially mentioned the emotion of happiness, "My utopian school would be where the girls are all nice to each other." Then he moved onto the importance of parent communication and teacher support. He then talked curriculum, "Where they feel like children and their parents feel like they're getting a good challenging education academically, but also socially and emotionally supported. A place that's safe for the emotional growth of a 13-year-old girl." He finishes his statement by discussing the importance of being "good people" ethically.

Participant three started by mentioning the positive aspects of his current school. He mentioned diversity, active learning, and social, emotional programs. He then shifted to eliminating current, prevailing practices in his Utopian School, "I could have everything, all of my druthers, would be to break down a lot of the walls of conventional, constructional, pedagogical methodology." He then said, "In my druthers, I would have a very diverse, very dynamic community." He finished by talking about the importance of brain research speaking to the physical attributes of development.

Participant four spoke to the fact of loving student-centered classrooms, "I feel like that is one of the best approaches in education and student learning is allowing students to take responsibility of their education, to discuss, to engage in discussion." He mentioned the purpose of the Harkness approach in not consensus, but rather gained and diverse perspectives. He talked about small class sizes to increase participation, problem-based activities to increase social and emotional engagement, and intellectual depth to create an impactful environment of understanding. He then summed it up with this statement, "I think that we need to move away from the industrial age of lecturing and

moving students through a factory line, and to really allow time for students to grapple with tough ideas, and to be creative and inventive."

Participant five, after making a joke about teaching orphans, shared her real thoughts on the critical nature parents play in the process, "I don't believe that, because I think parents are such an important part of it." She then said, "My ideal school has a really superior academic program that challenges bright kids." Participant five finished with this statement, "and it's got to have a strong character component." She really feels that we are teaching children, not students, but children.

Clustering Emergent Themes

After evaluating the data from the interview transcripts and recordings, I used a horizontal approach to code meaningful statements, clustered the statements by delimiting meanings, create themes based on the meanings, take the themes to develop textual descriptions, and finally, find over-lapping influence to create a universal textural description. The clustering process is detailed in the following paragraphs. The clustering will be organized by research question. The two research questions of this study were: (a) What are private middle school principals' perceptions on educational culture and individual student development; and (b) What are the experiences of private middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual student development?

Research question 1

After clustering the data into codes and then themes for the two research questions, I began to identify central ideas. In identifying responses to the first research question on principals' perceptions on educational culture and individual student

development, I identified six emergent themes: (a) *mission driven approach*, (b) *core developments*, (c) *depth of development*, (d) *active, intentional learning*, (e) *diverse environment* and (f) *constituency groups*. A description of each theme is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Themes Describing Principals' Perceptions on Educational Culture and

Individual Student Development

Theme	Description	Significant Statement Example
Mission Driven Approach	Process by which educational constituency groups align purpose, beliefs, philosophy, and vision.	"The idea is that every great organization knows their purpose. In the independent school world, we talk about our mission, we know our mission, and we run every decision through that mission."
Core Developments	The base developments that include intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development, including spiritual development for faith-based schools.	"I think it gives us a platform to work off of when we're talking about the intellectual piece, particularly when we're talking about skill building and when we're trying to interact with others and collaborate and work with people that are maybe not going to be so easy to work with in group settings."

Theme	Description	Significant Statement Example
Depth of Development	The level of depth required to best bring to fruition the areas of development. Revised Bloom's provides a framework; remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.	"Just this past week our honors eighth grade English teacher decided to do a different approach with her study of Night and the holocaust. She gave her essential questions to the kids, and said, "Put yourselves in groups. Decide which one of these questions your group wants to pursue, and I'll see you in two days."
Active, Intentional Learning	Reference to methodologies or programs that incorporate the basic developments and provide for a sufficient level of depth.	"I think that we need to move away from the industrial age of lecturing and moving students through a factory line, and to really allow time for students to grapple with tough ideas, and to be creative and inventive."
Diverse Environment	Reference to the type of environment that considers race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, socio-economic status, religion, and sexual preference.	"When I think of the people that would occupy it, I would like it to be an international occupancy; and that we were able ... not all, but we were able to expose all students to people who are different."
Constituency Groups	The collection of people involved in educating children, including parents, teachers, administrators, and staff.	"My question to the parents is always: why are you here? Well, we love the school, but what about the school do you love? If you love the school, then you know who we are."

Mission Driven Approach. Principals agreed that the mission provides an outline of the philosophical attributes of a school and sets the direction and vision for its constituents. The mission highlights to the greater community the identity of the school, such as whether the school has a religious affiliation, co-ed or single sex, grade levels, and intention. The mission also describes the environment, such as college preparatory, diverse, or selective. School also use missions, in regards to enabling student attributes. Private schools regularly refer to the mission to ensure alignment and consistency. I have included an example of a mission statement from The John Cooper School, "The John Cooper School is an independent, non-sectarian, co-educational, college preparatory day school. The School's mission is to provide a challenging education in a caring environment to a diverse group of select students, enabling them to become creative thinkers, responsible citizens and leaders, and lifetime learners." Here is what participant four said about mission statements, "We want to make sure that we are advancing that mission with curriculum, with pedagogical practices, and with even things such as field trips. From the people that we hire, to the students that we admit."

>   **Core Developments.** Participants provided feedback that supported the notion
>   that schools are much more than just academic institutions. Emphasizing a
>   whole-child approach is essential in cultivating the type of collaborative,
>   empathetic, honorable, and active environment required to bring out the best in
>   each student. Through programmatic practices, advisories, field trips, and varied
>   opportunities, independent schools highlight the importance of a holistic
>   approach. Participant four said of his students,

I think that if you were to compare a student that has gone through schooling this

way, having a voice at the table, to one that has not, to one that has been trained to

sit passively and absorb, I think that what we're teaching students is that they have

a voice, and their voice is important, and their contribution is needed.

Participant two's statement contributed to this theme of whole-child: "Yes. I feel like this

is our definition of whole child. This is how we're going to ... I think they all impact how

the girl looks at herself, how she looks at the world."

Depth of Developments. Based on revised Bloom's Taxonomy, the participants

regularly referred to the need for depth when teaching the core developments. Participant

four mentioned,

You can assess the depth of learning in a couple of different ways. One of the

ways that you can measure it is just through listening to the discussions that

students are getting, that are involved in. Also, in terms of written

communication, in our students' writing, I think that you can assess the depth of

understanding when you ask, whether it's a prompt or in discussion, an open-

ended question, and all students to explore a text, and to think deeply over that by

way of engaging and asking really important questions at the table, high-level

questions.

Participant four spoke to depth in regards to academic progress, whereas participant three

referenced depth in a social context when he said, "We put them into situations where

they need to work together with those kids, and they get to know those kids."

Active, Intentional Learning. For activities and programs to be meaningful and

have depth, the participants felt that the initiatives needed to be active, rather than

passive, collaborative, and emotionally engaging. Participant three mentioned, "We believe that those collaborative group experiences might be the most meaningful teaching moments in terms of mission-related issues." All five participants commented on the need to foster active methodologies, albeit the programs and situations were unique to the school. Some of the various techniques involved chapel, project-based learning, Harkness methodology, the Socratic Method, and active-learning.

Diverse Environment. Participants described the impact of diversity, or lack thereof, in their schools. "I spend 5 to 10 minutes pulling out of them (the students) what international means. The first thing they say is, "Well, you have kids here from all around the world." I say, "Yes, that's true," stated participant three, who school can boast of an international diversity of 60%.   He was speaking to the boys when the boys were struggling with each other's cultural differences and he was explaining how natural diversity helps promote understanding and inclusivity if intentionally addressed. For other participant's, diversity can be a struggle. "It's no easier for me. I have a little girl down the lower school, one of five African-American girls. No boys. It's not easy." said participant one. The participants felt that diversity promotes a sense of connectedness, well-being and belonging; however, a lack of diversity can foster a sense of isolation and stress.

Constituency Groups. Multiple participants referenced the importance of cultural alignment amongst the constituency groups, including students, parents, faculty, and administration. Participant two highlighted the importance of parent involvement,

Right now during Mars rover we've got a bunch of parents who are down there doing the judging. Yesterday I brought a group of parents on. I

invited them for lunch and gave them a tour of the middle school so that

they could just see what we do. It's a lot. Our development person will say,

"Hey, if I did this, do you think I'm building or breaking community?"

She'll ask. It's something we're very conscious of, of trying to make sure

that everybody is included and that we haven't left out any major groups or

things like that.

Many participants felt that faculty and parents are nervous around each other and

felt schools should work to promote alignment amongst all constituency groups.

"Our parents meet twice a year. Once per semester, by grade level. It's actually

run through our parent association. It's a PA meeting, but there's always an

educational piece of it," stated participant five. She was highlighting investing

time into parent training.

Research Question 2

With the second research question I asked, what are the experiences of private

middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual

student development? In this section of the study based on principals' experiences, I will

discuss the themes that emerged throughout the five participant interviews and the

feedback the principals provided regarding cultural and individual student development.

Throughout the data analysis, four emergent themes were discovered: (a) *traditional*

methodologies, (b) *lack of teacher knowledge*, (c) *lack of diversity in community*, and (d)

schedule constraints. A description of each theme is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Themes Describing Principals' Experiences on Educational Culture and

Individual Student Development

Theme	Description	Significant Statement Example
Traditional Methodologies	The process of shifting from known practices to unknown methodologies. The incorporation of new methods such as Harkness, Project-Based Learning, and Active Engagement.	"I would try and break down the traditional structures and elements that we think are necessary. Kids in rows is maybe one of the more iconic examples."
Lack of Teacher Knowledge	Training required to learn these new methodologies. Available professional development for teacher training.	"I think that our practices, if they were much more lecture-based and the teacher at the front of the room imparting knowledge on kids, the students in those classroom setting rarely get the opportunity to grapple with, to wrestle with ideas."

Theme	Description	Significant Statement Example
Lack of Diversity in Community	Limited willingness for families of diverse backgrounds to choose independent schools.	"When you look at diversity in ethnicity, we are not a very diverse group. I don't know the statistics off hand, but I would say that close to 90% of our students are Caucasian, which is not all that different from our surrounding area."
Schedule Constraints	Referencing the traditional schedule structure for schools and the restrictive nature on providing time required to participate in collaborative, interdisciplinary activities.	"Could our schedule evolve with whether you're in the middle of the catapult project, versus whether you're teaching balancing chemical equations?"

Traditional Methodologies. One of the more compelling themes that emerged

was a sentiment shared by all participants: change is difficult and old habits die hard,

convincing teachers on new methodologies requires, active training, communication,

empathy, and patience. Participant one said when referring to the traditional practice of

homework, "Every day I was getting emails about the homework. The teachers are killing

the kids. I have to say they probably were, right? Our babies were here until 6:00 in the

afternoons then going home, doing homework, coming back the next day." The notion of

students learning the skill of quantitative accountability over other social and emotional

skills was traditional methodology. The participants returned to the importance of skills

which provide significant depth, such as Project-based learning and Harkness. "There's

more project based learning across the curriculum. I feel like that's a nice way to get girls

more involved. We're still having a little bit of trouble letting go. Teachers are having trouble letting go of the curriculum," stated participant two. Participant four mentioned that each year before school, they provide Harkness training, for not only their staff, but for other willing private schools in the area.

Lack of Teacher Knowledge. The participants mentioned teachers coming out of college are not necessarily equipped to understand the newer methodologies, including activity-based learning, collaborative methodology, the development of emotional resilience, and integrity. In multiple ways, the participants felt many teachers feel most comfortable lecturing in front of a classroom of quiet children. Learning to let go can be chaotic and noisy, but many asked, "Isn't that what learning should be look like in our classrooms?" Moreover, Participant five summed it up simply, "Get these people here. Our faculty need more training."

Lack of Diversity in Community. One of the benefits of Diversity, borrowing from Darwin (1909); variation provides for additional complexity to promote greater opportunity. Even though, Darwin (1909) refers to biological life, the same idea might hold true to thoughts and ideas. All participants highlighted the importance of diversity, although many struggled to promote it based on mission conflict and geographical proximity. Participant four refers to the need to intentional cultivate a greater degree of diversity, "A majority of our faculty members are Caucasian, and that is something that we'd like to change, or at least open the doors to more diversity, but we haven't been strategic about it." "We are not a particularly appealing school to non-Christians,' stated participant five when considering the lack of diversity given the mission of the school. Many of the participants suggested, "We cannot be all things to all people."

Schedule Constraints. For more than a century, schools have run an industrialized format of education (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). The participants felt that this mechanistic approach has persisted and flourished in our classrooms making it difficult to break into new methodologies. One consequence that was identified was equally distributed schedules. In the real world, projects and endeavors require adaptability and flexibility, both of which, according to the participants are significantly limited in schools. Participant three suggested when considering a Utopian School,

> The Utopian school has great flexibility in scheduling and for me, this is
> pretty radical and progressive, is more the schedule is more project-based
> than discipline-based. If there are inter-disciplinary projects, great, but I
> sort of have this crazy idea that there are times when you're covering a
> topic, where if you see the kids every day for 50 minutes, it's really just
> fine. You don't need them any longer, you don't want them any longer, but
> you do want to see them every day so that they can practice. There are
> other projects where you want them for a big old chunk of time, and then
> you really don't want to see them for another two or three days.

Participant five added, "Just really flexible blocks with even grade-level teams determining the schedule for the trimester, or the unit. Maybe your schedule changed every three weeks."

Imaginative variation

In identifying responses to the first research question about principal perceptions on educational culture and student development, I acknowledged six emergent themes: (a) *mission driven approach*, (b) *core developments*, (c) *depth of development*, (d) *active,*

intentional learning, (e) *diverse environment* and (f) *constituency groups*. Analyzing the

data and synthesizing the clustered themes, I recognized a structure between each of the

six emergent themes. For schools to be aligned with an understood philosophy, vision,

and mission, a *mission driven approach* must be understood and referred to frequently.

From the mission the *core developments* will be identified. Typical core developments

among private schools included intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical skill

building, with the added skill of spirituality if the school was religious in nature. Each

core developments requires a *depth of development* to fully articulate the program. The

attributes of revised Bloom's taxonomy provided for a usable framework for reference

that includes remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating

(Anderson et al. 2001). The participants felt the best way to achieve the breadth and

depth was through *active, intentional learning*. This was highlighted by Harkness,

Project-Based Learning, and the Socratic Method. To foster the greatest level of intellect,

collaboration, empathy, ethics, and health, the more diverse the environment, the greater

the opportunity for understanding. Participants regularly referred to the social identifiers

of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, and

ability. To provide for the highest level of acceptance, it is critical that the *constituency*

groups are aware of the entire process and more importantly the connections and benefits

of this structure. This structure, based on participants' responses, could provide for a

framework of successful educational practices. To some extent, a school might find the

benefits described in this framework as a possible structure to promote life, long skills.

Therefore, I have surmised that all six emergent themes have strong connection, and will

in fact create an environment of self-reinforcing skills that will help children flourish in the 21st century.

In identifying responses to the second research question about experiences of private middle school principals with building an educational culture that supports individual student development, I identified four emergent themes: (a) *traditional methodologies*, (b) *lack of teacher knowledge*, (c) *lack of diversity in community*, and (d) *schedule constraints*. The four emergent themes related to current experiences highlight the possible constraints principals face in creating schools of the future. *Traditional methodologies* must be significantly adjusted to incorporate a more holistic, student-centered approach to education. With the recent changes to the SAT, ACT, and AP testing, the possibility of adjustment might be possible without a negative impact to content driven testing. Teacher expectations and professional development must be presented together to provide teachers with the intellect, communication skills, and emotional support to cultivate this new type of methodology and overcome a *lack of teacher knowledge*. While private education cannot be all things to all people, intentional diversification, such as using diversity teacher search agencies and providing for greater financial aid, can help to mitigate a *lack of diversity in community*. Also, new agencies have recently emerged, such as Independent School Management, which can provide insights into adaptable schedules helping with *schedule constraints*. I find these four emerging themes discrete, yet four all pose possible experiential constraints that interrupt the process of achieving a type of school described earlier based on the first six emerging themes.

Summary

In Chapter IV, I analyzed the data according to the data analysis steps detailed in Chapter III. In Phase 1, I used Bracketing to set aside my preconceived ideas and feelings about the perceptions and experiences of private middle school principals on educational culture and student development. As part of the second phase, a H horizontal I separated the data into chunks, each held with equal value. Meanings were constructed for the invariant qualities, and themes were considered. In the third phase of data analysis, imaginative variation, the structural essence was described, in an effort to be understood (Moustakas, 1994). In Chapter V, I will present the discussion, connection to the literature, the developed framework, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how private middle school principals perceive and experience educational culture and student development. The process, as outlined in Chapter III and described in Chapter IV, included gathering data from principal participant interviews conducted in the winter of 2016. Qualitative data were collected from the principal participants via personal interviews. Findings of the study were detailed in Chapter IV and a discussion of the framework, implications, and recommendations, based on the findings, are enclosed in Chapter V.

As I previously stated, my interest in the whole-child philosophy and holistic cultural development began very early on during my own educational experience. I became interested in how children successfully develop as I found success despite a number of limiting factors as outlined in this study. Neuropsychology helped me to connect how our intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical decision making is connected to the physical process of brain development. The most important factor in this educational discovery process was the malleability of the human brain and how it changed over time. I finished my Bachelor and Master of Education Degree and started teaching middle school students mathematics. For the next 19 years, I have continued to teach mathematics, lead as a Head of Middle School for the last 11 years, and enhance my own education by taking business and leadership classes. I have read over 100 books on human development. During this time, I have diligently watched children learn, teachers instruct, and parents advise. Currently, I am enrolled in the Doctorate of

Education program in Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University. The

entire doctoral experience, including the interviews, continue to refine my perceptions

and experiences, including the elements outlined in Chapter V.

Chapter V will be divided into four major sections. First, I will describe the

findings of the study as they relate to the research questions. Second, I will describe the

findings of the study as they relate to the literature review. Third, I will describe the

procedures I used to establish validity and legitimacy throughout the research. And

fourth, I will propose a framework for both student development and educational culture,

including recommendations for future research and thoughtful pedagogical practice.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

Two research questions guided the essence of my study. I conducted research on

the perceptions of private middle school principal participants on educational culture and

student development. Personal interviews were utilized to help answer the two research

questions.

Two research questions that guided my study were as follows:

1. What are private middle school principals' perceptions on educational culture
   and individual student development?

2. What are the experiences of private middle school principals with building an
   educational culture that supports individual student development?

The perspectives and experiences of private middle school principals on

educational culture and student development allowed me to examine how principals

prioritize what is important in private school education. The purpose for any educator is

to provide an optimal environment for learning and a framework for successful student

development. The theories and practices are as varied as the number of schools that exist. By conducting interviews of elite private school principals and looking for commonalities among the practices, I was able to discover themes that might provide for a framework based on educational perceptions and experiences. The feedback provided from the first research question focused on the perceptions of private middle school principals when considering educational culture and student development.

The data analysis from the first research question regarding perceptions on educational culture and student development led to the discovery of six emergent themes, and they are as follows: (a) *mission driven approach*, (b) *core developments*, (c) *depth of development*, (d) *active, intentional learning*, (e) *diverse environment* and (f) *constituency groups*. The data analysis from the second research question regarding experiences of educational culture and student development led to the discovery of four emergent themes, and they are as follows: (a) *traditional methodologies*, (b) *lack of teacher knowledge*, (c) *lack of diversity in community*, and (d) *schedule constraints*. The participants agreed that each "perceptive" theme provided for an element of positive influence on both the educational culture of the school and student development. The participants also agreed that each theme when reflecting on the "experience" of the school provided for an element of restriction on both the educational culture of the school and student development. Therefore, as the researcher I was compelled to see how these emergent themes were part of a larger framework. Upon further examination, I believe that these themes lend themselves to a universal framework for private, and possibly public, school environments, although I would propose additional studies to investigate beyond the narrow sample size.

Throughout the interview process, I found a pattern of consistency among the participant responses. As I progressed through the analysis and clustering phases, the pattern became more pronounced. It was through this process, I discovered a possible educational structure. For a private school to enhance student learning and foster a positive educational culture, specific identifiers must be considered. Therefore, I coded the first identifier *mission statement objectives and purpose*, as this helped to define what the school focused on and how it used the mission statement. I coded a second identifier *developmental needs* for any comment made by a principal that referred to the skill set a principal wanted to foster in the students. I coded a third identifier *depth*, as it considered how one determined the level of depth required to meet developmental saturation and mastery. A fourth identifier was labeled *programs and process*, that helped me explore the programs used to foster each development and provide for necessary depth. The fifth identifier was labeled *environment*, as it helped me recognize critical aspects of school culture. *Constituency groups*, was the sixth identifier and helped me recognize any person involved in fostering student success. These basic identifiers provided for a simple, yet profound discovery, resulting in the six "perceptual" themes.

During the "experiences" phase of discovery, participants focused on restrictions to their "perceptual" themes. As a result, the "experience" identifiers resulted in restrictors including the restrictions to *development*, *teacher expertise*, *diversity*, and *time*. These four elements provided a juxtaposition to the six perceptions.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Review of the Literature

Chapter II of this dissertation study was an exploration of the literature related to the current state of education, key players, educational culture, aspects of diversity, and

in-depth review on student development. I structured the review of the literature into six

subgroups as follows: (a) role of the principal (b) educational culture, (c) school culture

complexity; (d) educational inequality and social identifier correlations; (e) social

identifiers and social, emotional, ethical, and physical correlations, and (f) social,

emotional, ethical, and physical correlations and educational effects. These six themes

represented a body of knowledge that encompassed the literature on educational culture

and student development. I will use the following sections with the findings from my

study to connect those findings with the six subgroups in the literature review.

  Role of principal. The role of the principal represents a person responsible for

cultivating the mission statement. Typically, this includes a person who oversees

curriculum, accountability of depth, program development, hiring of teachers, student

selection, and parent, student, faculty communication. As previously mentioned in

Chapter II, I highlighted the importance of team building, communication, and problem

solving as part of the needed transformational leadership skills required in today's

complex world (Bayler, 2014). Bayler (2014) highlighted the change in the principal's

role since the 1950s, including the transformation from legal leaders in 1960s, to human

resource managers in the 1970s, to change initiators and instructional strategists in the

1980s. If you consider this transformation in line with the evolution of psychology,

sociology, philosophy, and health, it seems like a natural progression in line with

scientific understanding.

  Emergent themes such as *mission driven approach*, *core developments*, *depth of*

development, *active, intentional learning*, *diverse environment*, and *constituency groups*

are all connected to Bayler's (2014) recognition of educational progress.   Corcoran et al.

(2013) confirmed these ideals when suggested recommendations included, clearly

defined core competencies, narrow the principals' responsibilities, match skills of

principals with school needs, increase professional development, networking to improve

collaboration among principals, mentoring, accountability standards, meaningful

evaluation for principals, and commit resources. Unfortunately, principals have little

time to focus on these upper level leadership techniques (Bayler, 2014). The theme, *core*

developments, is one that closely aligns with core competencies. Principals would benefit

from an educational framework from which to reference. A theme that was prevalent in

each of the participant interviews was *mission driven approach*. As participant 4

mentioned, "The idea is that every great organization knows their purpose. In the

independent school world, we talk about our mission, we know our mission, and we run

every decision through that mission." Participants also mentioned that *depth of*

development, *active, intentional learning*, *diverse environment*, and *constituency groups*

as part of the role the principal plays in ensuring student development and a positive

educational culture.

> **Educational culture.** The second section in the review of the literature,
>
> Educational Culture, focused on what type of environment produces the best
>
> results. Dewey (1916) felt an educational environment needed to have a sense of
>
> freedom, much like a democratic atmosphere. The educational culture would
>
> require a level of ethical discourse allowing for essential developments to be
>
> promoted. Dewey's body of work highlighted five distinct areas of development;
>
> intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, physical development. The findings from
>
> research question one on *mission driven approach* and *core competencies* aligned

with Dewey's ideals on promoting educational culture and student development.

Participant four stated,

I think that if you were to compare a student that has gone through schooling this

way, having a voice at the table, to one that has not, to one that has been trained to

sit passively and absorb, I think that what we're teaching students is that they have

a voice, and their voice is important, and their contribution is needed.

Participant two's statement contributed to this theme of whole-child: "Yes. I feel like this

is our definition of whole child. This is how we're going to ... I think they all impact how

the girl looks at herself, how she looks at the world." Dewey was not alone in his

thinking, contemporary agreed with pieces and parts of his assessment as well (Achor,

2010; Gladwell, 2008; Goleman, 2006; Robinson, 2011).

School culture complexity. The third section in the review of the literature

provided an overview of The Complexity Theory. The Complexity allows researchers to

analyze complex systems, such as school environment (Ferreira, 2001). Ferreira (2001)

describes the relationship between complexity and disorder. If a system is of low

complexity, the order is easily understood, if the system is too complex, such as a

completely random system, then disorder is assured; however, Ferreira (2001) stated the

Complexity Theory helps us explain systems that are neither simple, nor random, such as

educational culture. The trick, as Jones (2013) pointed out that individuals within a

system will begin to influence the culture positively or negatively with each interaction.

The participants talked about creating a positive culture and referenced intentional

programs that fostered social, emotional, ethical, and physical growth. Participant one

stated, "We tend to want to think about academics, the arts and athletics- those three

pillars. We always say that character and citizenship are embedded within those." Each participant agreed that school is much more than just the academic classes educators teach.

Educational inequality and social identifier correlations. As referenced in Chapter II, complexity science highlights the importance of initial starting points in a system and how if even slightly deviated at inception, will create a significantly different paths (Johnson, 2007). According to Urban and Wagoner (2009), educational practices began in a cultural time that fostered racial, gender, and socio-economic inequality. As a result, schools have struggled to find solutions to these systemic inequalities. The results of these inequalities continue to be significant. Researchers concluded, the relationship between socio-economic status and struggling in academics, seemed to be a combination of factors including lack of skill building, exposure, attitude, behavior, physical health, and peer relationships (Ewijk & Sleegers, 2010; Letourneau et al., 2011; Shore, 2015). Also academic impact was associated with race. Information was retrieved for both middle-school and high-school samples, specifically from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), between the years of 1996 and 2002. On all factors, including years, subjects, and grades, White students statistically significantly outperformed their Black and Hispanic counterparts. Mendoza-Denton (2014) contended that often these discrepancies in performance are attributed to test bias, but he stipulated societal bias might be causing a greater impact. Participant four stated,

> When you look at diversity in ethnicity, we are not a very diverse group. I
>
> don't know the statistics off hand, but I would say that close to 90% of our

students are Caucasian, which is not all that different from our

surrounding area.

This reality was recognized as a deficit that needed to be corrected. Gender inequality in

schools is getting harder to identify, although it is still recognized in the workplace

(Olson, 2013). Each participant in the study referenced experienced inequalities at their

schools; however, each participant discussed the inequality as an area of growth for the

school.

  Social identifiers and social, emotional, ethical, and physical effects. Dewey

(1897; 1902; 1909, 1916) highlighted in his early works, educational development can

only be fostered when considering the development of the whole-child. Throughout

Dewey's works, he highlighted five areas of development, including intellectual, social,

emotional, ethical, and physical development. I reviewed literature pertaining to the

correlations between socio-economic status, race, and gender, and social connectedness,

emotional well-being, ethical behavior, and physical health. The three social identifiers

and the five factors constitute the relationship between *lack of diversity* and *core*

competencies. In the literature review, I identified multiple studies that SES seemed to

have a negative relationship with Dewey's positive factors of educational development.

Poverty is associated with lower connectedness, reduced well-being, negative behavior,

and poorer health (Martensa et al., 2014). Similar to SES correlations, there are negative

correlations between race and social, emotional, ethical, and physical attributes (Rose,

Joe, Shields, & Caldwell, 2014). Gender still produces mixed results, but this assumption

could be due to a higher level of social connectedness in females (Diemert, 1992). The

participants talked at length about fostering a whole-child education and also made

mention of ensuring students identified as low socio-economic status achieved success, but rarely mentioned a discrepancy between males and females. This connection correlated with the results in the literature review. Participant three, being at a school with 60% diversity stated, "At *Name of School*, if you choose us, you're going to get that (challenging education) plus this really very dynamic focus on and some pretty important expectations about the appreciation of diversity, really all kinds of diversity." He felt that once a level of diversity is achieved, the focus on academics happens naturally. The other schools in the study had low racial and socio-economic diversity.

Social, emotional, ethical, and physical correlations and educational effects. The evolution of education in the United States, specifically within junior highs and middle schools, has resulted in a system that has struggled to meet the needs of young adolescents (Robinson, 2011). The literature is extensive in regard to social, emotional, ethical, and physical effects on intellectual endeavors. Robinson (2011) pointed out that these attributes are not being met in all schools. Also pointed out in Chapter II, as more contemporary researchers, educators, and psychologists, (Frydenberg et al., 2009; Goleman, 2006; Lapan et al., 2014; Lemberger et al., 2015; Walton et al., 2012; Zullig, et al., 2011) learned more about social dynamics, the function of the brain, and the relationship to academic success, the research seems to corroborate Dewey's early assumptions of the importance of social consciousness and dynamics in schools.

When I analyzed the coding of core competencies, social factors were predominately mentioned more often than the other four developments, including intellectual factors. The results of the coding indicate the participants in these elite schools prioritize social factors at a high level. Emotional factor benefits were also

recognized in the literature review. Mental health seemed to play a role in students'

overall development. A relatively new area of study is the connection between mental

health and academic success in college. It was found that depression was a significant

predictor of lower GPA and higher rates of dropping out (Eisenberg, Golberstein, &

Hunt, 2009). Participants in the study also highlighted emotional factors as a critical

areas of development. Many schools mention nurturing environment in their mission

statements and philosophies.

Ethical factors, while not always related to academic factors, appear to correlate

to other factors, such as social connectedness. Vidourek et al. (2011, pg. 116) stated,

"School connectedness is a leading protective factor against youth engagement in risky

behaviors." These include ethical decisions in regards to drugs, violence, and sexual

behaviors. Finally, while not often considered related, physical factors associated with

academic achievement. Akos (2006) showed a positive statistically significant difference

in connection to those students participating in extracurricular activities, as opposed to

those students who did not participate, on GPA performance. All participants referenced

physical health activities as part of their school environments, including recess, PE,

Athletics, etc.

Legitimation of the Findings

Mentioned previously in Chapter I and III, I addressed the Limitations and

Transferability of the findings to different environments. In phenomenological,

qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the findings is limited, because of researcher

bias (Johnson & Christensen, 2012); therefore, it is not uncommon in a qualitative study

to find transferability as a limitation. As a result, readers are cautioned to limit the

findings to this specific study. Data were collected from five participants who are principal in private middle schools. Participants in other settings might have different perceptions or experiences based on their own environments and constraints.

Investigating the Trustworthiness and Researcher Credibility of the study, I highlighted the possibility of researcher bias. Creswell (2014) preferred the term "validation" as a replacement term for trustworthiness. Based on this recommendation, I applied a member checking strategy based on the work of Lincoln & Guba (1985). Once the documents were transcribed, I allowed the five participants to read through and clarify or make changes to their earlier statements. Also, in the Bracketing or Epoche section of Chapter IV, I detailed my beliefs and opinions on educational culture and student development, to understand and set aside my biases. This approach allowed me to mute or minimize validation during the interview sessions and again while I was reviewing the transcripts. The interview questions were edited by my dissertation chair to address bias. I also took notes in a journal during the individual interviews as part of a data triangulation process during my analysis stage.

Educational Frameworks

The analysis of the research located in the Chapter II literature review, the perceptions and experiences of five elite middle school principals, and my own educational perceptions and experiences has lead me to propose a possible educational framework for student development and a framework for educational culture. I realize that this proposed framework for student development and educational culture may have limited transferability, yet I feel it may allow for consideration into future research.

The first component of the framework is represented the five basic elements of human development. While some may add a sixth development, spirituality, as appeared frequently in Chapter IV, I have elected to exclude this development based on the fact, many private and public schools do not have a religious or spiritual component. Based on the literature review in Chapter II and participant responses in Chapter IV, there were similarities to suggest that each individual developmental characteristic reinforces the other four developments. As a single example, this connection would suggest a person who enhances their social skills might have a greater capacity for learning, be more emotionally confident, develop a greater sense of equity, and have developed more connections in the brain. This correlation is not to say that there are not individuals who have enhanced their social acumen and use the skill for manipulation and negative behavior, but this premise may reinforce the belief that all five developments are essential for success.

In Chapter I, I highlighted in my introduction how mainstream education has been developed and sustained over the course of the last 150 years. Schools were based on a mechanistic standard of development influenced by the industrial revolution and southern reconstruction (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Much like the way industrial manufacturing developed, early educators also sought to create a linear function of educating our youth (Robinson, 2011). As a result, the mechanistic approach of education fostered a generation of skilled workers who flourished in our factories and plants. Students were able to achieve a fundamental level of reading, writing, mathematics, history, and science by learning in passive environments designed to produce consistency and conformity. However, limited understanding in regard to incorporating emotional, social, ethical, and

physical growth into the process was ever explored. In the 1900s, the fields of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and health, fitness, and brain research expanded our ability to prioritize the understanding the complexity of human development.

Using Bloom's framework for depth, basic *knowledge* provides a person with the general intellect necessary to *understand* what is happening to them during emotional events. With this comprehension, one can begin to *apply* this knowledge when experiencing events that elicit emotion. As a person begins to apply this knowledge and understanding to their emotion, a person will begin to critically *analyze* their emotions. The person will then *evaluate* their emotions in context of a situation and then begin to *create* solutions to the situation.

To illustrate Dewey's framework of over-lapping influence and Bloom's level of depth, imagine a young adult, I'll name him Joshua, standing on a stage behind a podium, getting ready to present to his peers. Joshua hands begin to sweat, his heart begins to beat rapidly, and he feels sick to his stomach. This situation can debilitate many young adults, but Joshua has studied emotional responses in his classes. Joshua imagined his brain accessing areas of his amygdala, understood this response may affect his ability to speak. Joshua takes a step back, collecting himself. He applied the calming techniques he learned in advisory while analyzing the situation and the message he wanted to deliver. Running for student council was stressful, yet he understood positive emotion will be an essential part of his speech. Joshua changed that negative emotion into a passionate response. The speech resonates with enthusiasm, motivation, and spirit. Joshua turned a potentially negative fight or flight response, into a controlled response, creating an atmosphere of emotional control. Perhaps, if students were taught these

developmental skills, a process based on Deweyan principles, the students would begin to understand the power of the over-lapping influence each factor has promoting the other factors of development.

During my study, the participants mentioned possible methodologies to consider. Harkness method, used by one of the schools, promoted Bloom's level of depth which was required to promote knowledge to creation. The methodology promoted intellectual discussion, social communication, emotional engagement, and ethical discourse. Another school promoted field trips which cultivated social interaction and collaboration, emotional experience, ethical decision-making, and physical activity. Another school implemented the project-based learning approach, which stimulates deep intellectual discussion, social team-work, emotional investment, ethical give and take, and physical movement.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how participants perceive and experience student development and educational culture. The five participants, all with more than 10 years independent school experience, all middle school principals from elite private schools, and each with educational backgrounds higher than a bachelor's degree, agreed to participate in this dissertation study. All participants elected to meet personally to be interviewed, that were later transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. The following recommendations for future research studies are based on ideas from the participants as well as from my own reflections.

Researchers might conduct studies on mission statement development, implementation, and communication. As many of the participants mentioned, the

school's mission statement provides the philosophy, framework, and vision for the students, parents, and faculty. By conducting a research study on mission statements, implementation, and communication, a school could review, revise, and adapt their current environments as needed. Ideally, the development of mission statements would might continue to advance the collective knowledge of educational practices and insights.

Further studies on core competencies and levels of depth could also be considered. The correlation between intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development is extensive; however, the complexity of influence still remains mostly untested. Ideally, researchers could use both qualitative and quantitative studies to link the connection between the five developmental factors. Researchers might also conduct studies on the level of depth within each development. While creative and critical thinking are frequently mentioned, they could be precisely measured if Bloom's framework was used in conjunction with a development. An example of a study might include, if students advance social skills based on Bloom's (revised) six levels of development (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.), would that promote a greater degree of intellect, emotional stability, ethical standards, and physical health?

Studies on programs that best enhance these five core competencies at a level of depth necessary to fully articulate human development, could also be studied. Many participants currently use Harkness, Project-Based Learning, Active Engagement, Inquiry-based instruction, etc. to articulate their programs. Potentially they could use this framework for the basis of their study.

Another potential research study would include a study of constituency groups. If parents, students, faculty, and administration fully applied these core competencies at a level of depth through intentional programs and practices, school leaders might foster a more collaborative, connected culture of satisfied teachers, parents, and students. Researchers could look at the role of parents and the success of academic institutions.

A research area that would be of great interest to me would be further research on the impact of diversity, or lack thereof on the core competencies. Researchers that consider the positive impact of diverse environments on social connectedness, well-being, ethical decision making, and academic success would be highly valuable. Also, as research techniques become more sophisticated, the connection between these qualitative areas might prove to be important.

Recommendations for Practice

As a result of this study, several philosophical and practical implications and applications for educators in independent schools, and potentially public schools, in the United States. I will offer suggestions to parents, students, teachers and school leaders who are interested in implementing the student development and educational culture framework. The following suggestions are based on the findings in this study and the review of the literature.

First, the attributes a principal should have to effectively cultivate an educational culture that will produce whole-child development were identified. These identifiers are based on the literature review, participant responses, and my personal experience and perceptions. First and foremost, a principal must understand the value of intellectual endeavors. Too often principals can get bogged down in the minutia of education and

forget that most of the intellectual content is quickly forgotten by the students. Rather, a principal should look to skill building as a basis for *intellectual development*, including rationality, logic, process thinking, divergent thinking; *social development*, including communication skills, collaboration, team work; *emotional development*, including empathy, motivation, grit; *ethical skills*, including integrity, honesty, and character; and *physical skills*, including fitness, nutrition, and sleep. Most of the subjects currently taught in schools provide for these types of skill development, provided the students are actively, not passively, engaged in learning and at the level of depth necessary to achieve these skills. I would recommend sociology, psychology, philosophy, health, and brain research classes to fully achieve the level of understanding necessary to develop a fully articulated curriculum.

Second, teachers spend their educational time ensuring the intellectual depth necessary to teach a fully articulated curriculum. However, a teacher should be familiar with the whole-child theory of development so the teacher can begin to comprehend the life-skills necessary to develop well-articulated class lessons. The typical complaint among teachers is they have to sacrifice content to use active-engagement techniques, Harkness methodology, and Project-Based Learning. Content in the 1800s was a valuable commodity, but currently, any student with a smart phone can access content in seconds. Skill building has replaced content as the essential commodity. Teachers need training focused on skill building, whole-child development, and if possible, programs that produce the best results.

Third, quite possibly the most important skill for a student to realize is that failure is a necessary part of learning. To learn the skills necessary to maximize our potential,

educators must first experience those situations that cultivate those skills, including being wrong on occasion. Seek out challenges intellectually, socially, emotionally, ethically, and physically. Embrace the idea of transitioning from knowledge to comprehension, then application of the skill, this will result in the child being able to analyze the situation critically, then later evaluate, and finally create or adapt the situation to their own needs.

Giving parents advice can be difficult, but necessary. It is essential for a school to regularly meet with parents to discuss the importance of our mission, benefits of the core competencies, how to achieve a level of depth, their role in helping their child find success, and the important role they play in the process.

Conclusion

To describe human development in it most basic function, including what researchers say about intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development was imperative in this research. Research, participant interviews, educational experts, and my own personal experience were used to contrast and compare the findings. Bloom's taxonomy was referenced to ensure a level of depth necessary to fully articulate each development, including referencing The Complexity Theory to show the interconnected nature each development has in the development of the other four developmental skills. Next, programs were referenced to best highlight the development of the skills at the level depth necessary to maximize whole-child development, including Harkness, Project-Based Learning, and Active-Engagement Techniques. Diversity of ideas, thoughts, and people made for the greatest impact on the culture of the school, as diversity increased ideas, connectedness, well-being, and health. Communication needs

to be prioritized, among parents, teachers, students, and school leaders to ensure understanding.

Formal education was initiated in an era when the needs of the country involved workers who could be consistent and compliant (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Our nation continues to evolve and grow. The structures of the past are now obsolete for the present. Thomas Jefferson once wrote in a letter to Samuel Kercheval on July 12, 1816 (National Park Service, 2016), and which know is presented as one of the four main quotes at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington D.C.,

> "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but
> laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human
> mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new
> discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions
> change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also
> to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still
> the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever
> under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

Those past educational ideals represent our "barbarous ancestors" and educators simply continue to try to mend the coat to fit the children of today. John Dewey recognized this intuitively more than 100 years ago, yet the knowledge has come more recently. Educators must change their thinking, change their philosophies, and use the full scope of human knowledge, including what researchers know about brain research, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and health to guide educators as they create educational mission statements that will guide our communities and nation to a prosperous future.

REFERENCES

Achor, S. (2010). *The Happiness Advantage.* New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.

Akos, P. (2006). Extracurricular participation and the transition to middle school. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 29*(9), 1-9.

Akos, P., & Galassi, J. P. (2004). Gender and Race as variables in psychosocial adjustment to middle and high school. *Journal of Educational Research, 98*(2), 102-108. doi:10.3200/JOER.98.2.102-108

Anderson, L.W. (Ed.), Krathwohl, D.R. (Ed.), Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Raths, J., & Wittrock, M.C. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Complete ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

Ashley, K. M., Ennis, L. S., & Owusu-Ansah, A. (2012). An exploration of middle school students' perceptions of personal adolescent wellness and their connectedness to school. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education, 2*, 74-89.

Balyer, A. (2014). School principals' role priorities. *Journal of Theory & Practice in Education (JTPE), 10*(1), 24-40.

Blakemore, S., & Choudhury, S. (2006). Development of the adolescent brain: implications for executive function and social cognition. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 47*(3-4), 296-312.

Boadi, K. (2015). A meeting point of ideas. In J. S. Cadwell & J. Quinn (Eds.), *A classroom revolution: Reflections on Harkness learning and teaching* (pp. 105-

107). Exeter, NH: Trustees of Phillips Exeter Academy.

Bøe, T., Sivertsen, B., Heiervang, E., Goodman, R., Lundervold, A., & Hysing, M. (2014). Socioeconomic status and child mental health: The role of parental emotional well-being and parenting practices. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 42*, 705-715. doi:10.1007/s10802-013-9818-9

Brown, C. P., & Lan, Y. (2015). A qualitative metasynthesis of how early educators in international contexts address cultural matters that contrast with developmentally appropriate practices. *Early Education and Development, 26*(1), 22-45. doi:10.1080/10409289.2014.934176

Cauce, A. M., Hannan, K., & Sargeant, M. (1992). Life stress, social support, and locus of control during early adolescence: Interactive effects. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 20*, 787-798.

Cisler, A., & Bruce, M. A. (2013). Principals: What are their roles and responsibilities? *Journal of School Counseling, 11*(10), 1-27

Complete College America. (2013). Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere. Retrieved from http://completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf

Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013). Rethinking leadership: The changing role of principal supervisors. Retrieved from http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/district-policy-and-practice/Documents/Rethinking-Leadership-The-Changing-Role-of-Principal-Supervisors.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Daly, B., Shin, R. Q., Thakral, C., Selders, M., & Vera, E. (2009). School engagement among urban adolescents of color: Does perception of social support and neighborhood safety really matter? *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 38*(1), 63-74. doi:10.1007/s10964-008-9294-7

Darwin, C.R. *The Origin of Species.* Vol. XI. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14; Bartleby.com, 2001. www.bartleby.com/11/.

Dewey, J. (1895). The theory of emotion (II): The significance of emotion. *Psychological Review, 1*, 13-32.

Dewey, J. (1897). My Pedagogic Creed. *School Journal, 54*, 77-80.

Dewey, J. (1902). *The child and the curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Dewey, J. (1909). *Moral principals in education*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy in education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Diemert, A. (1992). A needs assessment of fifth grade students in a middle school.

Doucet, F., & Keys Adair, J. (2013). Addressing race and inequity in the classroom. *Young Children, 68*(5), 88-97.

Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E., & Hunt, J. B. (2009). Mental health and academic success in college. *Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy: Contributions to Economic Analysis and Policy, 9*(1)

Ewijk, R.V., & Sleegers, P. (2010). Peer ethnicity and achievement: A Meta-Analysis into the Compositional Effect. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 21*(3), 237-265.

Ferreira, P. (2001). Tracing complexity theory. Retrieved from web.mit.edu/esd.83/www/notebook/ESD83-Complexity.doc

Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic

Friedman, M. & Friedman R. D. (1980). *Free to choose: A personal statement*. New York, NY: Harcourt Inc.

Fryenberg, E., Care, E., Freeman, E., & Chan, E. (2009). Interrelationships between coping, school connectedness and well-being. *Australian Journal of Education, 53*(3), 261-276.

Georgakis, S., Evans, J. R., & Warwick, L. (2015). The Academic achievement of elite athletes at Australian Schools. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 3*(1), 84-97.

Gillborn, D. (2014). Racism as policy: A critical race analysis of education reforms in the United States and England. *Educational Forum, 78*(1), 26-41.

Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers: The story of success.* New York, NY: Little Brown.

Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference.* New York, NY: Little Brown.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of ground theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Goleman, M. (2006). *Social Intelligence: The new science of social relationships.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Goleman, M. (1996). *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Graham, E., (2013). 'A Nation at Risk' turns 30: Where did it take us? - NEA Today (NEA Today) http://neatoday.org/2013/04/25/a-nation-at-risk-turns-30-where-did-it-take-us-2/

Gutman, L. M., & Midgley, C. (2000). The role of protective factors in supporting the academic achievement of poor African American students during the middle school transition. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 29*(2), 223-248.

Han, H. (2014). Supporting early childhood teachers to promote children's social competence: Components for best professional development practices. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 42*(3), 171-179. doi:10.1007/s10643-013-0584-7

Hoye, R., Nicholson, M., & Brown, K. (2015). Involvement in sport and social connectedness. *International Review for The Sociology of Sport, 50*(1), 3-21. doi:10.1177/1012690212466076

Ing, M., Aschbacher, P., & Tsai, S. (2014). Gender differences in the consistency of middle school students' interest in engineering and science careers. *Journal of Pre-College Engineering Education, 4*(2), 1-10. doi:10.7771/2157-9288.1090

Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2012). *Education Research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Johnson, N. (2007). *Simply Complexity: A clear guide to complexity theory.* Oxford,

 England: Oneworld Publications.

Jones, T. B. (2013). *Complexity theory,* in Irby, B. *The handbook of educational theories.*

 Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Juvonen, J., (2007). Reforming middle schools: Focus on continuity, social

 connectedness, and engagement. *Educational Psychologist, 42*(4), 197-208.

Juvonen, J. (2006). Sense of belonging, social relationships, and school

 functioning. In P. A. Alexander & P. H. Winne (Eds.), *Handbook of*

 educational psychology (2nd ed., pp. 655‑674). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence

 Erlbaum Associates.

Krefting, L. (1999). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. In

 A. K. Milinki, *Cases in qualitative research: Research reports for discussion and*

 evaluation (appendix C, pp. 173-181). Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

Lapan, R. T., Wells, R., Petersen, J., & McCann, L. A. (2014). Stand tall to protect

 students: School counselors strengthening school connectedness. *Journal of*

 Counseling & Development, 92(3), 304-315. doi:10.1002/j.1556-

 6676.2014.00158.x

Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tool: A

 call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 22*, 557-584.

 doi:10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557

Lemberger, M. E., Selig, J. P., Bowers, H., & Rogers, J. E. (2015). Effects of the student

 success skills program on executive functioning skills, feelings of connectedness,

 and academic achievement in a predominantly Hispanic, low-income middle

school district. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 93*(1), 25-37.

doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2015.00178.x

Letourneau, N. L., Duffett-Leger, L., Levac, L., Watson, B., & Young-Morris, C. (2013).

Socioeconomic Status and Child Development: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of*

Emotional & Behavioral Disorders, 21(3), 211-224.

doi:10.1177/1063426611421007

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. A. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, *CA: Sage.*

Lobel, T. (2014). Sensation: The new science of physical intelligence. Retrieved from

http://wn.com/dr._thalma_lobel_|_sensation_the_new_science_of_physical_intelli

gence

Loukas, A., Ripperger-Suhler, K. G., & Horton, K. D. (2009). Examining temporal

associations between school connectedness and early adolescent adjustment.

Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 38, 804-812. doi:10.1007/s10964-008-9312-9

Lunenburg, F.C. (2013). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): Failing to address the

inequalities in education. *Focus on Colleges, Universities, and Schools, 7*(1), 1-4.

Lunenburg, F.C., & Ornstein, A.C. (2012). *Educational administration*: *Concepts and*

practices (6th ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

Malik, F., & Shujja, S. (2013). Social competence and school systems as predictor of

academic achievement in high and low achieving Pakistani school children.

Journal of Behavioural Sciences, 23(1), 77-92.

Martens, P., Chateau, D. d., Burland, E. J., Finlayson, G. S., Smith, M. J., Taylor, C. R.,...

Bolton, J. M. (2014). The effect of neighborhood socioeconomic status on

education and health outcomes for children living in social housing. *American Journal of Public Health, 104*(11), 2103-2113.

Mendoza-Denton, R. r. (2014). A social psychological perspective on the achievement gap in standardized test performance between White and minority students: Implications for assessment. *Journal of Negro Education, 83*, 465-484.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publishers.

NAIS. (2013). Diversity and mission statements. Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/Diversity-and-Mission-Statements-148224.aspx

National Park Service (2016). Quotations, Thomas Jefferson memorial descriptions. Retrieved from https://www.nps.gov/thje/learn/photosmultimedia/quotations.htm

Nash, J. F. (1949). Equilibrium points in n-person games. *Mathematics: G. Polya, 36*, 48-49.

Niehaus, K., Rudasill, K. M., & Rakes, C. R., (2012). A longitudinal study of school connectedness and academic outcomes across sixth grade. *Journal of School Psychology, 50*, 443-460.

Nielsen, L. (2014). Winning by deemphasizing winning: Establishing climates for moral development in sports. *Sport Journal, 1*.

Office of the White House, (2002). *Good start, grow smart: The Bush administration's early childhood initiative*, Retrieved from

http://www.Whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood/sect1.html (2002)

Ohikuare, J. (2013). When minority students attend elite private schools. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/12/when-minority-students-attend-elite-private-schools/282416/

Olson, J. (2013). Human capital models and the gender pay gap. *Sex Roles, 68*(3/4), 186-197. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0208-5

Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2003). Effect sizes in qualitative research: A prolegomenon. *Quality and Quantity, 37*, 393-409.

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(3), 323-367. doi:10.3102/00346543070003323

Partanen, A. (2011). What America keeps ignoring about Finland's school success. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/12/what-americans-keep-ignoring-about-finlands-school-success/250564/

Phelps, E. A. (2006). Emotion and cognition: Insights from studies of the human amygdala. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *57,* 27-53. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070234

Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1969) *The psychology of the child.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Piaget, J. (1932). *The language and thought of the child, 1926; Judgment and reasoning in the child, 1928; The Child's Conception of the World, 1929; The Child's*

Conception of Physical Causality, 1930; The Moral Judgment of the Child, 1932.

Oxford, England: Harcourt, Brace.

Popp, J. (2015). John Dewey's theory of growth and the ontological view of society. *Stud Philos Educ, 34*, 45-62. doi:10.1007/s11217-014-9425-4

Rapp, D., Sloan, K., & Hostrup, J. (2006). Contesting NCLB and high-stakes accountability: Continuing acts of resistance. *Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy, 3*(1), 95-100.

Ravitch, K. (2013). *Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. West Sussex, UK: Capston Publishing Ltd.

Robinson, K. (2011) – Ted Talk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySvbePkjEJo

Rose, T., Joe, S., Shields, J., & Caldwell, C. H. (2014). Social integration and the mental health of Black Adolescents. *Child Development, 85*(3), 1003-1018. doi:10.1111/cdev.12182

Ross, A. G., Shochet, I. M., & Bellair, R. (2010). The role of social skills and school connectedness in preadolescent depressive symptoms. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 39*(2), 269-275. doi:10.1080/15374410903532692

Rudasill, K. M., Niehaus, K., Crockett, L. J., & Rakes, C. R. (2014). Changes in school connectedness and deviant peer affiliation among sixth-grade students from high-poverty neighborhoods. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 34*(7), 896-922. doi:10.1177/0272431613511330

Rüppel, F., Liersch, S., & Walter, U. (2015). The influence of psychological well-being on academic success. *Journal of Public Health, 23*(1), 15-24. doi:10.1007/s10389-015-0654-y

Ruseski, J. E., Humphreys, B. R., Hallman, K., Wicker, P., & Breuer, C. (2014). Sport participation and subjective well-being: Instrumental variable results from German survey data. *Journal of Physical Activity & Health, 11*(2), 396-403. doi:10.1123/jpah.2012-0001

Saldaña, J. W. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Salinas, M. F., & Garr, J. (2009). Effect of learner-centered education on the academic outcomes of minority groups. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 36*(3), 226-237.

Samuels, C. A. (2007). Superintendents content in jobs, but stressed, too. *Education Week, 27*(6), 7.

Senkerik, R., Oplatkova, Z., & Zelinka, I. (2011). Investigation on evolutionary chaos controller synthesis for Hénon Map Stabilization. *AIP Conference Proceedings, 1389*, 1027-1030. doi:10.1063/1.3637785

Shore, L. M. (2015). Talking in class: a study of socio-economic difference in the primary school classroom. *Literacy, 49*(2), 98-104. doi:10.1111/lit.12040

Simpson, D. D., & Sacken, D. M. (2015). The ethical principle of regard for people: Using Dewey's ideas in schools. *International Journal of Progressive Education, 11*(1), 41-58.

Smith, A. (1776). *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. London, UK: W. Strahan and T. Cadell

Stedman, L. C. (1994). The Sandia Report and U.S. achievement: An assessment. *Journal of Educational Research, 87*(3), 133

Štraus, M. (2014). (In)equalities in PISA 2012 mathematics achievement, socio-economic gradient and mathematics-related attitudes of students in Slovenia, Canada, Germany and the United States. *Solsko Polje*, *25*(5/6), 121-143.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Suldo, S. M., Friedrich, A. A., White, T., Farmer, J., Minch, D., & Michalowski, J. (2009). Teacher support and adolescents' subjective well-being: A mixed-methods investigation. *School Psychology Review, 38*(1), 67-85.

Tichy, M., Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Roseth, C. J. (2010). The impact of constructive controversy on moral development. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 40*(4), 765-787. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00597.x

Torres, A. (2015). *State of diversity practice in independent schools*. Retrieved from http://www.nais.org/Magazines-Newsletters/ISMagazine/Pages/State-of-the-Diversity-Practice-in-Independent-Schools.aspx

Turnipseed, S., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Accountability is more than a test score. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 23*(7-11), 1-8. doi:10.14507/epaa.v23.1986.

Urban, W. J. & Wagoner, Jr. J.L. (2014). *American education: A history*. New York, NY: Routledge.

U.S. Department of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, April 1983.

Walton, G. M., Cohen, G. L., Cwir, D., & Spencer, S. J. (2012). Mere belonging: The power of social connections. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 102*(3), 513-532. doi:10.1037/a0025731

Weinstein, B. (2011). *Ethical Intelligence: Five principals for untangling your toughest problems at work and beyond.* Novato, CA: New World Library.

Vidourek, R. A., King, K. A., Bernard, A. L., Murnan, A. L., & Nabors, L. (2011). Teachers' strategies to positively connect students to school. *American Journal of Health Education, 42*(2), 116-126. doi:10.1080/19325037.2011.10599179

Yeung, R. (2015). Athletics, athletic leadership, and academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 47*(3), 361-387.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zawadzki, M., Danube, C., & Shields, S. (2012). How to talk about gender inequity in the workplace: Using WAGES as an experiential learning tool to reduce reactance and promote self-efficacy. *Sex Roles, 67*(11/12), 605-616. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0181-z

Zullig, K. J., Huebner, E. S., & Patton, J. M. (2011). Relationships among school climate domains and school satisfaction. *Psychology in Schools, 48*(2), 133-145. doi:10.1002/pits

APPENDIX A

> **Institutional Review Board**
> **Office of Research and Sponsored Programs**
> 903 Bowers Blvd, Huntsville, TX 77341-2448
> Phone: 936.294.4875
> Fax: 936.294.3622
> irb@shsu.edu
> www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/

Sam Houston
STATE UNIVERSITY
A Member of The Texas State University System

DATE: November 25, 2015

TO: Jonathan Strecker [Faculty Sponsor: Dr. George Moore]

FROM: Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Private Middle School Principal Perceptions and Experiences
Regarding Educational Culture and Student Development [T/D]
PROTOCOL #:   2015-11-26968

SUBMISSION TYPE: INITIAL REVIEW

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: November 25, 2015

REVIEW CATEGORY: Title 45 §46.101(b)(2)

Thank you for your submission of **Initial Review** materials for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

* What should investigators do when considering changes to an exempt study that could make it nonexempt?

It is the PI's responsibility to consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might make that study nonexempt human subjects research. In this case, please make available sufficient information to the IRB so it can make a correct determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Donna Desforges
IRB Chair, PHSC
PHSC-IRB

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Sam Houston State University IRB's records

APPENDIX B

Questions in research study:

1. Can you describe for me the mission and vision of (name of school)?

    a. Particular Attributes of mission

    b. Particular attributes of vision

    c. General philosophy

    d. Student Development/School Culture

2. Tell me about your role as Middle School Principal in helping to shape the

    school culture?

    a. General philosophy

    b. Practical focus

3. Tell me about your role as Middle School Principal in helping to shape

    individual student development?

    a. General philosophy

    b. Practical focus

4. Can you talk about school diversity and its potential impact on student

    development?

    a. Race

    b. Gender

    c. Class

    d. Other

5. Can you talk about school diversity and its potential impact on school culture?

    a. Race

      b. Gender

      c. Class

      d. Other

6. What particular programs do you feel are most essential at (name of school) in developing students individually?

      a. Intellectual

      b. Social

      c. Emotional

      d. Ethical

      e. Physical Programs?

7. If you could develop your own school, a Utopian school, what would you prioritize?

VITA

Jonathan P. Strecker

Education

Doctorate of Education at Sam Houston State University, June 2013–present.

Dissertation title: "Private middle school principal perceptions on educational culture and student development."

Master of Education at The Ohio State University, August 2007

Bachelor of Education at The Ohio State University, August 2006

Academic Employment

Head of Middle School, The John Cooper School, June 2008 – present.

Head of Middle School, The Stanley Clark School, July 2005 – June 2008.

Grade 5 – 8 Math Teacher, The Stanley Clark School, August 1997 – June 2008.

Presentations at Professional Meetings

Strecker, J. P. Private middle school principal perceptions on educational culture and student development – Dissertation in Progress (Student Issues). Southwest Education Research Association (SERA), February 2015.

Professional Membership

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)

Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)