

# An Analysis of the Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Community Development in Selected Counties of the Alabama Black Belt

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## Abstract

Leadership styles are surmised to influence community development. The study, therefore, assessed the relationship between leadership styles and community development in selected Black Belt Counties of Alabama. Data were collected from a purposive sample of 38 locally elected officials, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The most dominant leadership style selected was participating; followed by telling and selling, with identical ratings; delegating; autocratic, and democratic. The most preferred economic indicators were improving the physical infrastructure and constructing a 24-hour health facility. Additionally, participants indicated that constructing or improving of an industrial park; locating a manufacturing company, and locating a tier-1 automobile supplier are important facets of community development. Furthermore, the more preferred educational factor was providing after school programs, and the more preferred social factor was providing recreational facilities. The regression results revealed that of the economic indicators, democratic leadership style had the most relative importance; of the educational indicators, telling leadership style had the most relative importance, and of the social indicators, delegating leadership style had the most relative importance. For the overall community development indicator, democratic leadership style had the most relative importance.

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles, Leadership, Community Development, Black Belt

## 1. Introduction

Communities need quality leadership to bring about quality communities. That said, leadership may be variously defined; however, most of the definitions appear to suggest “influence.” For example, Yukl (1981) defined leadership as a process whereby one person intentionally exerts influence over other people to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization. Hersey & Blanchard (1993, p. 94) described leadership as the “process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in efforts toward goal achievements in a given situation.” Yet, another definition of leadership provided by Brennan, Moon, & Pracht (2015) is the ability to mobilize people towards a shared vision, and encouraging their contributions to the process of achieving the vision. They explained that the type of leadership behavior a leader uses depends on the nature of the organization.

Leadership is related to leadership style. McCrimmon (2011) emphasized that leadership styles refer to how leaders relate to subordinates, and how leaders manage subordinates and make decisions. Lester (1975, p. 5) came up with three general leadership styles, namely, autocratic, democratic, and free-rein. In autocratic leadership, the leader “determines all policies, activities, and goals of the organization.” In democratic leadership, the leader provides a “shared leadership that promotes a feeling of satisfaction and achievement as the group makes progress on tasks.” In free-rein leadership, the leader gives “minimum guidance” to followers. Additionally, Lester stated that the democratic leadership style appear to have the potential to realize maximum results. Blanken (2013) alluded to eight leadership styles; specifically, charismatic; innovative; command and control; laissez-fair; pace setter; servant; situational, and transformational. Blanken argued that no leader has one leadership style, and therefore, has to use a combination of leadership styles in order to engage members of an organization to meet common goals. Sharpe (2015) also discussed five types of leadership styles that a leader may use. The first is the cavalier who is pleasure-seeking; the second is the martyr who works beyond reasonable expectations; the third is the abdicator who is a leader in title only; the fourth is the controller who tries to use power to frighten his or her followers into action, and the fifth is the activator who tries to involve others when handling a group problem or situation. The author stressed that the style chosen is situation dependent. Therefore, the leader must analyze the situation to choose the most appropriate style, in order to enhance the group’s or organization’s success.

Furthermore, it is argued that leadership affects leadership styles, and leadership styles affect community development. Community development, especially economic, educational, and social issues, as it

relates to leadership is a concern in the Black Belt counties of Alabama. Winemiller (2009) described characteristics of the Alabama Black Belt as high rates of poverty, low taxes on property, high rates of unemployment, low-achieving schools, high rates of out-migration, high levels of single-parent homes, high levels of teen pregnancies, limited access to health-care services, and largely inhabited by African American populations. Therefore, this study focuses on the Alabama Black Belt because development in this region has generally been slow. Also, a lack of effective leadership threatens community development causing concern for sustainability and growth. Nelson et al. (2012) maintained that rural areas, like the Alabama Black Belt, usually have fewer resources to respond to development proposals and growth pressures than urban and suburban areas. Therefore, these rural communities must find strategies and policies that complement their available resources. Correspondingly, Cavaye (2001) explained that the vitality of a community depends on its ability to maintain adequate infrastructure, have access to services, enhance business and economic opportunities, and establish policies to generate expected outcomes.

Based on the foregoing arguments, there is a need to closely examine issues of community development and its relationship to leadership in the Alabama Black Belt Counties. The purpose of the study, therefore, was to analyze the relationship between leadership styles and community development in selected counties of the Alabama Black Belt. The specific objectives were to (1) examine situational leadership, (2) examine economic, educational, and social attributes of community progress, and (3) examine the relative impact or importance of leadership styles to community development.

## **2. Literature Review**

Leadership styles determine how leaders will behave. Also, the economic, educational, and social dimensions of community development depend to a large extent on the quality of leadership. This section outlines and discusses selected literature on leadership styles as well as economic, educational, and social issues related to community development.

### *2.1 Leadership Styles*

Hershey and Blanchard (1993) discussed the situational leadership model, originally developed by Hershey and Blanchard, which Hershey modified in 1985. Situational leadership is based on direction (task behavior) a leader provides; the level of emotional support (relationship behavior) a leader provides, and the level of readiness that the followers show when carrying out a task or function. In the model, the authors identified four leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. They explained that telling leadership style involves high task and low relationship; selling leadership style involves high task and high relationship; participating leadership style involves high relationship and low task, and delegating leadership style involves low relationship and low task. They emphasized that each style is appropriate and effective; it is situation dependent.

Miller & Miller (2008) analyzed leadership styles for success in collaborative work. They argued that collaboration is a key organizational mechanism for advancing a community's or organization's mission. The authors indicated six principles of collaborative leadership, which included inspiring commitment and action, leading as peer problem solver, building broad-based involvement, sustaining hope and participation, practicing servant leadership, and viewing leadership as a process. They also discussed six different styles that a community or organization can practice while collaborating. These styles included contingency leadership, transactional leadership, traditional leadership, charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership.

Pasmore (2014) addressed the development of a leadership strategy as an ingredient for organizational success. He posited five factors that should be considered when developing a leadership strategy for organizational success. The first is identify the "quantity" of leaders needed (number, level, location, function, reporting relationships). The second is to identify the qualities desired in selection process (demographics, diversity, background, experience level). The third involves indicating the skills and behavior that are needed to implement the business strategy and create the desired culture (skills, competencies, knowledge base). The fourth encompasses the collective leadership capabilities of leaders acting together in groups and across boundaries to implement strategies, solve problems, respond to threats, adapt to change, support innovation, etc. The fifth is the desired leadership culture, including the leadership practices in use (collaboration across boundaries, engagement of employees, accepting responsibility for outcomes, creating opportunities for others to lead).

Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2014) discussed different types of leadership styles. They argued that leadership style has an effect on quality of work life and organizational performance. The authors specifically mentioned two types of leadership styles; transformational and transactional. They explained that transformational leadership style focuses on the development of followers as well as their needs. However, transactional leadership style focuses on exchange of rewards and targets between employees and management. The authors further described managers with the transformational leadership style as those who concentrate on

the growth and development of value system of employees; whereas, managers with the transactional leadership style motivate through incentives.

Okoji (2014) assessed the influence of leadership styles on community development programs implemented in rural communities. He found that community leaders who adopted democratic styles usually foster open communication among the followers in the implementation of community development programs. In addition, followers enjoyed freedom of operation under a democratic leader, and such leaders usually encouraged team work. He also reported that democratic leaders place more emphasis on rewards of the followers in community development program implementation. However, there was no effective communication between autocratic leaders and their followers. The autocratic leaders were, generally, very rigid in their views about the implementation of community development programs. Despite, these findings, both democratic and autocratic leadership styles had positive and significant effects on the implementation of community development programs. The effect was greater though for the democratic leadership style than the autocratic leadership style.

## *2.2 Economic Issues and Community Development*

Baharanyi, Zabawa, & Boateng (2000) discussed ending the legacy of poverty in the rural south. They explained that the condition of the Southern Black Belt had historical and socioeconomic roots. They argued that the region was one of the most underdeveloped in the U.S., based on its high levels of poverty, low average income, few employment opportunities, high levels of unemployment, and high proportion of unskilled residents. The authors made a case that success in rural or community development requires the integration of several functional parts, and contingent on strategies that are knowledge-based. Furthermore, the authors argued that social scientists can work with various community groups to enhance community development. However, they stressed that based on their experiences, local capacity to do community development is quite weak; leadership for governance and local citizen participation is usually low, and local organizations that assist in providing help for community development are also weak to make significant impact. They stressed a need to strengthen capacity of local institutions or organizations to positively enhance community development.

Rainey & McNamara (2002) investigated tax incentives as an effective development strategy for rural communities. The authors stressed that taxes, along with many other factors, can affect the location of industrial activity. They mentioned that a large portion of the growth in rural areas happen in areas that are close to metropolitan areas. They contended, therefore, that tax policy can be a factor in whether a potential firm chooses a community on one side of a metropolis relative to another. Consequently, a reduction of any kind of taxes in the latter communities (i.e., in communities usually not chosen) will decrease resources and lessen the long-run competitiveness and ability to grow.

Huling (2002) examined building a prison economy in rural America. He explained that rural communities have suffered from a shift in the economy's structure and economic down turns such as declines in farming, mining, timber-work, and manufacturing. He further indicated that these issues led to the use of prisons as source of income and uplift for many struggling rural communities. The latter phenomenon has already become a major factor driving criminal justice policy toward the mass incarceration of the urban poor. The author found that some incentives offered for prison development in rural or small towns include financial assistance and concessions, such as donated land, upgraded sewer and water systems, and housing subsidies.

King, Mauer, & Huling (2003) assessed big prisons, small town prison economics in rural America. The findings indicated that depending on prisons as a means of economic development is not an efficient long-term growth plan. The authors reported that locating prisons in a geographical area did not noticeably decrease unemployment or raise income per capita. They stated that many prison-county economies usually exclude themselves from other options of sustainable development once these economies become a "prison town", and do not further effectively discuss other forms of economic development.

Zekeri (2004) conducted a study on the causes of enduring poverty in Alabama's Black Belt. The author reported nine underlining causes of poverty. These include race (high concentration of African Americans); family structure (high concentration of female-headed households and single parents); lack of jobs and income; business closings; age (high concentration of children and the elderly); lack of human capital endowment; social cost of space (physical isolation); globalization (dependency on outside profit-seeking firms), and poor public goods and services. The author suggested that attention should be placed on the needs of the people as well as the opportunity to build their own future by making decisions about their communities.

Nelson et al. (2012) evaluated essential smart growth fixes for rural planning, zoning, and development codes. They discussed a growth policy that small towns and rural communities can implement. The authors also suggested ten strategies that will help in ensuring that communities develop fiscally, environmentally, and socially. The ten strategies included the following: determine areas for growth and for preservation; incorporate fiscal impact analysis in development reviews; reform rural planned unit developments; use wastewater infrastructure practices that meet development goals; right-size rural roads; encourage appropriate densities on

the periphery; use cluster development to transition from town to countryside; create annexation policies and development standards that preserve rural character; protect agricultural and sensitive natural areas, and plan and encourage rural commercial development.

### *2.3 Educational Issues and Community Development*

Afterschool Alliance (2007) examined how afterschool programs are helping kids in rural America succeed. The Alliance found that in regions where opportunities and resources are limited, afterschool programs are often times the only source of supplemental enrichment in literacy, nutrition education, technology, and preparation for college entrance exams. The study indicated that collaboration, among local partners and businesses as well as families and residents in the establishment of new or updated afterschool programs, is essential to improving the quality of life for youth in rural communities. Some of the improvements to quality of life include reduction in at-risk behaviors; removal of transportation barriers; enhancement of academic potential, and promotion of literacy skills and healthy lifestyles.

Letiecq, Bailey, & Keller (2007) evaluated rural afterschool programs that assist at-risk youth and their families. They found that afterschool programs in small rural communities had an effect on youth and their families. Programs designed to have a nurturing adult teacher aspect, and enhanced life skills such as decision making, conflict resolution strategies, positive peer relationships, and social interactions had positive outcomes. The authors also reported that having a safe facility for afterschool programs lessened a youth's risk to engage in antisocial behaviors, and motivated youth to take advantage of opportunities to complete homework in order to interact with peers during leisure time.

Collins, Bronte-Tinkew, & Logan (2008) analyzed strategies for improving out-of-school programs in rural communities. They found that rural out-of-school programs faced obstacles, and these obstacles included serving at-risk populations; geographic isolation contributing to poor access to transportation; limited funding, and few highly trained staff members. They suggested five strategies for obtaining resources for rural out-of-school programs, namely, considering building coalitions to help with transportation; identifying possible funding sources; increasing the number of trained staff members using existing volunteer organizations to recruit staff, and maximizing resources.

Lindahl (2011) assessed the state of education in Alabama's K-12 rural public schools. The findings showed that students in rural schools performed below their peers in both reading and math, except for math performance on the 11th grade Alabama High School Graduation Examination, where they performed the same as their peers. Lindahl also indicated that Alabama's rural districts service a lower percentage of minority students than its non-rural districts; however, the rural districts' test scores were behind those of the non-rural districts. An additional finding was that rural districts spent a higher percentage of their budgets on transportation and that rural districts were smaller than non-rural districts.

Hightower et al. (2011) evaluated improving student learning by supporting quality teaching. They found that youth who participated in high-quality early-childhood education programs compared to those who did not, tend to have higher grades and are more likely to earn a high school diploma. They also reported that these youth are less likely to engage in criminal activities, and have a stronger ability to focus and participate in school work. The authors concluded that training and strategies should be implemented to help administration and teachers become more effective leaders in assisting troubled youth. Furthermore, they indicated characteristics such as teacher coursework, degree attainment, and certifications have a big impact on quality education.

### *2.4 Social Issues and Community Development*

Brennan, Barnett, & Baugh (2007) analyzed youth involvement in community development related to implications and possibilities for Extension activities. They stressed that when older youth become more active in their communities, it influences younger ones to do the same, and it is a way to enhance social and civic skill development. They argued that this same influence is needed from Extension and community development professionals to motivate youth of all ages to become involved in their communities, and encourage the youth to believe that they can make a difference through their participation in community building efforts and projects on any level.

Orrell & Ouellette (2008) evaluated effective summer youth employment programs. The authors argued that greater accountability must be taken by the community and administration in planning, implementing, reporting, and evaluating opportunities and programs during the summer for the youth. They emphasized that the purpose of most summer youth employment programs is to introduce youth to the labor market in order to gain a better understanding of attendance, punctuality, communication, listening to instructions and criticism, solving problems, and being proactive. The authors found that most summer programs reinforce key academic skills that are relevant in everyday life.

Witt & Caldwell (2010) addressed the rationale for recreation services for youth. They maintained that the capacities of youth should be developed with adult involvement and guidance. They argued that parks and

recreation departments are primarily useful in providing support, opportunities, programs, and services to facilitate the growth of adolescents into fully capable adults. The authors also argued that participation in the programs that parks and recreation departments offer is related to autonomy and identity development, positive social relationships, learning conflict resolution, academic success, mental health, and civic engagement.

Lerner & Lerner (2011) assessed positive development for youth. The authors reported that youth that participated in afterschool programs and activities, such as 4-H, were more likely to exhibit healthy behaviors and decision making (e.g., participate in physical activity, not use drugs, and not engage in delinquent behaviors). They also reported that participation in afterschool programs can influence youth to engage in science, engineering, and computer technology programs, which in turn influences future interests of study and career paths.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2014) examined the National Juvenile Justice Action Plan in order to provide opportunities for youth in society or their communities. It made recommendations that state and local authorities could use to reduce juvenile delinquency. Some of the recommendations include the following: establishing and enhancing programs that bring together teachers, school administrators, social service providers, police, juvenile justice practitioners, and citizens; developing partnerships between parks and recreation agencies, libraries, public housing agencies, community centers, and gymnasiums to furnish safe sites for positive activities for youth; advocating volunteerism for mentoring and tutoring programs; increasing funding for youth employment and training programs, and reviewing allocation of funding to ensure equitable distribution of resources for delinquency prevention programs in schools.

### 2.5 Summation

The above literature review has examined leadership styles, economic issues and community development, educational issues and community development, and social issues and community development. A common thread throughout the literature is that positive leadership styles, economic, educational, and social outcomes lead to community development. Hence, the need to examine the relative importance of leadership styles to community development in the Alabama Black Belt.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed and used to collect the data for the study. It consisted of five sections, namely, situational attributes, economic scenario, educational scenario, social scenario, and demographic attributes. The questionnaire was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the Institution for review and approval, before being administered using purposive sampling. It was administered to elected city and county officials from selected Black Belt Counties of Alabama; specifically, city councillors, mayors, and county commissioners. The Black Belt was chosen because of its unique characteristics and challenges (already alluded to in the Introduction).

Four Black Belt Counties were selected and labeled as counties A, B, C, and D for confidentiality reasons. Counties A and D are situated in the east of the Black Belt; county B is located in the west of the Black Belt, and county C is located in the central part of the Black Belt. The data were collected through self-administration by subjects in the spring, summer, and fall of 2015 as well as spring of 2016. The assistance of county Extension agents was sought to facilitate the process. In all, 38 local officials were surveyed; this was considered adequate for the analysis.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS 12.0 (Mapinfo Corporation, Troy, NY). The descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, and correlational analysis. The general model for the multiple regression analysis was stated as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + X_1\beta_1 + X_2\beta_2 + \dots + X_n\beta_n + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

- Y = dependent variable
- $X_i$  = independent variables
- $\beta_i$  = coefficients
- $\varepsilon$  = error term

Four models were developed based on community development components and the overall community development indicator; particularly, economic, educational and social scenario indicators, and the composite of the three sets of indicators.

The empirical model for model 1 was stated as:

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LS_i \quad (2)$$

Where:

EC = unified economic indicator

$\beta_i$  = coefficients

LS<sub>i</sub> = leadership styles

Equation 2 can be expanded to reflect a broad range of leadership styles thus:

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TEL + \beta_2 SEL + \beta_3 PAR + \beta_4 DEL + \beta_5 AUT + \beta_6 DEM \quad (3)$$

Where:

EC = a mean of eight economic attributes (support for manufacturing, retail, automotive supplier, landfill, jail, physical infrastructure, industrial park, and health facility)

TEL = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

SEL = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

PAR = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

DEL = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

AUT = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

DEM = 1 if respondent indicated not likely; 2 if respondent indicated somewhat likely; 3 if respondent indicated likely; 4 if respondent indicated most likely

$\beta_i$  = coefficients

Identical models were set up for models 2 to 4, as follows:

Model 2

$$ED = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TEL + \beta_2 SEL + \beta_3 PAR + \beta_4 DEL + \beta_5 AUT + \beta_6 DEM \quad (4)$$

Where:

ED = unified educational indicator, a mean of two educational attributes (support for line item in budget for improvement in academic performance, and after school classes or programs)

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 3

$$SO = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TEL + \beta_2 SEL + \beta_3 PAR + \beta_4 DEL + \beta_5 AUT + \beta_6 DEM \quad (5)$$

Where:

SO = unified social indicator, a mean of two social attributes (support for funds for recreational facilities, and summer classes or programs)

Independent variables = as previously described

Model 4

$$CD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TEL + \beta_2 SEL + \beta_3 PAR + \beta_4 DEL + \beta_5 AUT + \beta_6 DEM \quad (6)$$

Where:

CD = composite community development indicator, a mean of twelve attributes (support for manufacturing, retail, automotive supplier, landfill, jail, physical infrastructure, industrial park, health facility, line item in budget for improvement in academic performance, after school classes or programs, funds for recreational facilities, and summer classes or programs)

Independent variables = as previously described

Specifically then, the empirical models hypothesize that the unified economic indicator (ED), unified educational indicator (ED), unified social indicator (SO), and the composite community development (CD) are influenced by telling leadership style (TEL), selling leadership style (SEL), participating leadership style (PAR), delegating leadership style (DEL), autocratic leadership style (AUT), and democratic leadership style (DEM). These leadership styles were selected based on the review of the literature and authors' experiences. It was assumed that the directions of the influences or expected signs of the independent variables were not known a priori. The criterion that was used to evaluate the model was the beta coefficient, also known as the standardized beta. The beta coefficient measures the relative impact or importance of the independent variable to the dependent variable. This indicates that the larger the beta coefficient, the stronger the independent variable's influence on the dependent variable (O'Sullivan & Russell, 1995).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The summary of the demographics revealed more male than female elected officials (74 vs. 26%); more Black elected officials than other races (76 vs. 24%); more older (over 44 years) than younger elected officials (86 vs. 11%); more highly educated (college graduates or higher) officials than otherwise (61 vs. 37%), and more officials with higher annual household incomes (equal to or greater than \$50,000) than otherwise (69 vs. 20%). The average number of years the participants had been in office or held position was ten years.

Table 1 shows responses on situational attributes (or leadership styles). Respondents were presented with a situational statement: “the members of your staff in your department or organization usually are able to take responsibility, but recently, they are not responding to your new standards of excellence.” When respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to Instruct, or direct staff members to improve the situation described above, 11% indicated somewhat likely; 40% indicated likely, and 46% indicated most likely. Also, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to persuade or convince staff members to improve the situation, again 11% indicated somewhat likely; 40% indicated likely, and 47% indicated most likely. In addition, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to encourage staff members to “buy-in” to improve the situation, 11% stated somewhat likely; 42% stated likely, and 47% indicated most likely. When respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to relinquish some authority for flexibility and creativity to improve the situation, 18% stated somewhat likely; 42% stated likely, and 31% stated most likely. Furthermore, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to demand that what they wanted must be done because they said so to improve the situation, 16% answered somewhat likely; 40% answered likely, and 32% answered most likely. Lastly, when respondents were asked to what extent they were likely to defer to majority opinion to improve the situation, 24% answered somewhat likely; 53% answered likely, and 16% answered most likely. These six sets of questions and/or responses align, respectively, with telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles.

Table 1. Situational Attribute (Leadership Style) Responses

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Instruct, or Direct</b>		
(Telling)		
Not Likely	1	2.6
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	15	39.5
Most Likely	18	47.4
<b>Persuade or Convince</b>		
(Selling)		
Not Likely	1	2.6
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	15	39.5
Most Likely	18	47.4

Table 1. Continued

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Buy-in</b>		
(Participating)		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	16	42.1
Most Likely	18	47.4
<b>Authority for Flexibility and Creativity</b>		
(Delegating)		
Not Likely	0	7.9
Likely	3	18.4
Somewhat Likely	16	42.1
Most Likely	12	31.6
<b>Demand Directives be Carried Out</b>		
(Autocratic)		
Not Likely	5	13.2
Likely	6	15.8
Somewhat Likely	15	39.5
Most Likely	12	31.6
<b>Defer to Majority Opinion</b>		
(Democratic)		
Not Likely	3	7.9
Likely	9	23.7
Somewhat Likely	20	52.6
Most Likely	6	15.8

The most dominant leadership style (based on likely and most likely) is the participating leadership style, 90%; followed by the telling leadership style and selling leadership style, both were 87%; delegating leadership style, 74%; autocratic leadership style, 71%, and democratic leadership style, 68%. Since these were high ratings (greater than 68%), there appears to be multiple leadership styles at play among the respondents; a possible case of situational leadership (Hershey & Blanchard, 1993; Blanken 2013; Sharpe, 2015).

Table 2 presents responses for economic scenario attributes presented to participants. The participants were given a scenario: “the economic situation in your community has not improved much over the last 20 years. Companies would like to invest in your community, but they are demanding incentives in the form of tax breaks.” They were then asked a series of eight questions to ascertain their feedback. Regarding the extent to which they were likely to support a manufacturing company locating to the community, with significant tax incentives, 26% indicated likely, and 66% indicated most likely. Regarding the extent to which they were likely to support a retail business locating to the community, with significant tax incentives, 29% indicated likely, while 61% indicated most likely. Regarding the extent to which they were likely to support a tier-1 automobile supplier locating to the community, with significant tax incentives, 32% indicated likely, and 61% indicated most likely. Considering the extent to which they were likely to support a landfill locating to the community if it will benefit the community economically, 21% stated likely, and another 21% stated most likely.

Considering the extent to which they were likely to support the construction of a jail in the community if it will benefit the community economically, 42% stated likely, and 37% stated most likely. Pertaining to the extent to which they were likely to support development or improvement of physical infrastructure, 11% answered likely, while 87% answered most likely. Focusing on the extent to which they were likely to support the construction or improvement of an industrial park in the community, 11% answered likely, while 84% answered most likely. Focusing on the extent to which there were likely to support construction of a health facility in the community to provide a 24-hour urgency care, 11% responded likely, and 84% responded most likely.

The ratings, based on likely and most likely, for constructing a 24-hour health facility, improvement of physical infrastructure, and construction or improvement of an industrial park were very high, respectively, 97, 97, and 95%. Identical ratings were also high for locating a manufacturing company, tier-1 automobile supplier, and retail business, respectively, 92, 92, and 81%. The rating for construction of a jail was fairly high, 79%. However, the indicator with the lowest rating was locating a landfill in the community, 42%. This is not surprising given the bad publicity in locating landfills in communities, with the perceived environmental concerns. The high ratings for the first six indicators express the desire of locally elected officials to improve the economic situations in their communities. These findings are in agreement with

Table 2. Economic Scenario Responses

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Manufacturing</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	3	7.9
Somewhat Likely	10	26.3
Most Likely	25	65.8
<b>Retail</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	11	28.9
Most Likely	23	60.5
<b>Automobile Suppliers</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	3	7.9
Somewhat Likely	12	31.6
Most Likely	23	60.5
<b>Landfill</b>		
Not Likely	17	44.7
Likely	5	13.2
Somewhat Likely	8	21.1
Most Likely	8	21.1
<b>Jail</b>		
Not Likely	4	10.5
Likely	4	10.5
Somewhat Likely	16	42.1
Most Likely	14	36.8



<b>Physical Infrastructure</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	1	2.6
Somewhat Likely	4	10.5
Most Likely	33	86.8
<b>Industrial Park</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	2	5.3
Somewhat Likely	4	10.5
Most Likely	32	84.2
<b>Health Facility</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	1	2.6
Somewhat Likely	4	10.5
Most Likely	33	86.8

Baharanyi et al. (2000), who make a case for improving economic conditions in the Alabama Black Belt. Also, they are in agreement with Rainey & McNamara (2002) who stressed that providing tax incentives could help spur growth in rural communities.

Table 3 reflects responses for educational and social scenario attributes presented to participants. Participants were given an educational scenario: “the dropout rate has been increasing and graduation rate has been declining steadily over the last 10 years. Many reasons, including, the quality of teachers, lack of recreational and after school programs, have been cited to be contributing to these statistics. In fact, many students are leaving the public schools for private schools because state laws provide funding for these students to attend the private schools; this action means less money for the public schools.” Regarding the extent to which they were likely to support including a line item in the budget for classes to improve academic performance in the school system, 32% answered likely, while 55% answered most likely. Considering the extent to which they were likely to support after school classes or activities in the school system to improve academic performance, 18% answered likely, and 76% answered most likely. Participants were then given a social scenario: “crime, drugs, break-ins, and other deviant behaviors are on the increase in the community.” Focusing on the extent to which they were likely to solicit funds to build and/or support recreational facilities for the youth in the community, 34% indicated likely and 66% indicated most likely. With respect to the extent to which they were likely to support summer classes or programs in the community, 32% indicated likely, while 66% indicated most likely. In the cases of educational and social scenarios, the ratings, based on likely and most likely, were very high, with educational scenario indicators, support for after school classes or activities and a line item budget to improve academic performance rated, respectively, 95 and 87%; the social scenario indicators, support for recreational facilities and summer classes or programs, were rated, respectively, 100 and 79%.

These results are consistent with Afterschool Alliance (2007) and Letiecq et al. (2007) who supported the use of after school programs to help improve the quality of life of youth in rural communities, including enrichment in literacy, preparation for college exams, and the reduction in antisocial behaviors. The study also seems to agree with Orrell & Ouellette (2008) and Witt & Coldwell (2010). Orrell & Ouellette emphasized that summer youth employment programs help youth to gain soft skills, such as punctuality, communication, solving problems, and being proactive, as well as reinforcing key academic skills. Witt & Caldwell argued that recreational programs are useful in providing support for the growth of adolescents into fully responsible adults. Hence, the propensity of the respondents to highly support afterschool, recreational, summer programs.

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the regression analysis. The minimum and maximum values for the leadership styles were, respectively, 1.000 and 4.000, and the mean values ranged from 2.763 to 3.368. Moreover, the minimum and maximum values for the community development components and the overall community development indicator were, respectively, 2.000 and 4.000, and the mean values ranged from 3.381 to 3.632. Table 5 shows the multiple regression results. The first result reflects the relationship between leadership styles and the unified economic scenario indicator. The beta coefficients were 0.015, -0.021, 0.038, -0.028, 0.051, and 0.205 for telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles, respectively. The democratic style had the most relative impact, followed by autocratic, delegating, participating, selling, and telling leadership styles. Democratic, autocratic, participating, and telling leadership styles had a positive impact on the unified economic indicator. This seems to suggest that the aforementioned styles enhance economic progress. However, delegating and selling leadership styles had a negative impact. This means that the latter leadership styles may depress economic progress.

The second result shows the relationship between leadership styles and the unified educational scenario indicator. The beta coefficients were 0.408, -0.037, 0.023, -0.091, -0.376, and 0.138 for telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles, respectively. In this case, the telling style

had the most relative impact, followed by autocratic, democratic, delegating, selling, and participating leadership styles.

Table 3. Educational and Social Scenario Responses

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Line Item</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	5	13.2
Somewhat Likely	12	31.6
Most Likely	21	55.3
<b>After School Classes or Activities</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	2	5.3
Somewhat Likely	7	18.4
Most Likely	29	76.3
<b>Recreational Facilities</b>		
Not Likely	0	0.0
Likely	0	0.0
Somewhat Likely	13	34.2
Most Likely	25	65.8
<b>Summer Classes or Programs</b>		
Not Likely	1	2.6
Likely	0	0.0
Somewhat Likely	12	31.6
Most Likely	25	65.8

Telling, democratic, and participating leadership styles had a positive impact on the unified educational indicator; whereas, autocratic, delegating, and selling had a negative impact. This implies, for example, that telling leadership style enhances educational progress and autocratic leadership style depresses educational progress.

The third result presents the relationship between leadership styles and the unified social scenario indicator. The beta coefficients were -0.110, 0.133, 0.004, -0.208, -0.147, and 0.168 for telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles, respectively. Here, the delegating style had the most relative impact, followed by democratic, autocratic, selling, telling, and participating leadership styles. Democratic, selling, and participating leadership styles had a positive impact on the unified social indicator; and, delegating, autocratic, and telling had a negative impact. This implies, for example, that democratic and selling leadership styles enhance social progress, and delegating and autocratic leadership styles depress social progress.

Table 4. Variable Definitions for Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Telling	38	1.00	4.00	3.316	0.775
Selling	38	1.00	4.00	3.316	0.775
Participating	38	2.00	4.00	3.368	0.675
Delegating	38	1.00	4.00	2.974	0.915
Autocratic	38	1.00	4.00	2.895	1.008
Democratic	38	1.00	4.00	2.763	0.820
Economic	38	2.38	4.00	3.477	0.345
Educational	38	2.00	4.00	3.381	0.470
Social	38	2.00	4.00	3.566	0.560
CDevelop	38	2.75	4.00	3.632	0.516

The fourth result reflects the relationship between leadership styles and the overall community development indicator. The beta coefficients were 0.011, -0.060, 0.091, -0.042, -0.109, and 0.233 for telling, selling, participating, delegating, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles, respectively. The leadership style with the most relative impact was the democratic style, followed by autocratic, participating, selling, delegating,

and telling leadership styles. Democratic, participating, and telling leadership styles had a positive impact on the community development indicator. This seems to suggest that these styles enhance community development. However, autocratic, delegating, and selling leadership styles had a negative impact. This implies that the latter leadership styles depress community development.

Table 5. Relationship between Leadership Styles and Economic, Educational, and Social Scenario Indicators as well as Overall Community Development Indicator

Variable	Beta Weight
<b>Leadership Styles/Economic Scenario</b>	
Telling	0.015
Selling	-0.021
Participating	0.038
Delegating	-0.028
Autocratic	0.051
Democratic	0.205
<b>Leadership Styles/Educational Scenario</b>	
Telling	0.408
Selling	-0.037
Participating	0.023
Delegating	-0.091
Autocratic	-0.376
Democratic	0.138
<b>Leadership Styles/Social Scenario</b>	
Telling	-0.110
Selling	0.133
Participating	0.004
Delegating	-0.208
Autocratic	-0.147
Democratic	0.168
<b>Leadership Styles/Community Development</b>	
Telling	0.011
Selling	-0.060
Participating	0.091
Delegating	-0.042
Autocratic	-0.109
Democratic	0.233

Since the relative impacts of each leadership style appears four times (i.e., under each “situation”), a sign grid or table was developed for them (Table 6). It confirms that democratic, participating, and telling leadership styles enhance community development, and delegating, autocratic, and selling leadership styles depress community development. The results are in partial agreement with Okoji (2004) who found that both autocratic and democratic leadership styles had positive effects on community development programs. Of course, in this study also, democratic leadership style enhances community development.

Table 6. Magnitude (and number) of Leadership Styles on Community Development

Variable	Positive (number of times)	Negative (number of times)
Telling	3	1
Selling	1	3
Participating	4	0
Delegating	0	4
Autocratic	1	3
Democratic	4	0

The results also seem to suggest that when a leader defers to majority opinion (democratic leadership style), encourages followers to buy-in to the vision (participating leadership style), and instructs or directs followers (telling leadership style), community development will likely improve. On the flip side, when a leader relinquishes some authority for flexibility and creativity (delegating leadership style), demands followers carry out tasks by “hook or crook” (autocratic leadership style), and persuades or convinces followers to carry out tasks (selling leadership style), community development will likely be adversely affected. Also, the democratic leadership style had the most relative impact giving the confirmation to Lester’s (1975) assertion that this leadership style has the potential to realize maximum results. Furthermore, based on correlational analysis, there was an overall positive relationship ( $\rho = 0.11$ ) between the combined leadership style and the combined community development indicator; however, this relationship was not significant ( $p = 0.523$ ). This lends credence to the notion that, at least, one leadership style must be in operation in a particular situation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993).

## 5. Conclusion

The study assessed the relationship between leadership styles and community development in selected counties of the Alabama Black Belt. Specifically, it examined situational leadership attribute; examined economic, educational, and social attributes of community progress, and examined the relative impact or importance of leadership styles to community development. Data were collected from a purposive sample of 38 locally elected officials, and analyzed by descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

The results showed that the most dominant leadership style (by selection) was participating leadership style; followed by telling leadership style and selling leadership style, and delegating leadership style. The most preferred economic scenario indicator was improvement of physical infrastructure and constructing a 24-hour health facility; followed by construction or improvement of an industrial park; locating a manufacturing company and a tier-1 automobile supplier, and locating a retail business. Locating a landfill had the lowest rating. In addition, in considering the educational and social scenarios; ratings were all high. For the educational scenario ratings, support for after school classes or activities was higher compared to support for a line item budget to improve academic performance. For the social scenario, support for recreational facilities was slightly higher than support for summer classes or programs. The regression results showed that democratic, participating, and telling leadership styles had enhancing effects on community development; yet, the democratic leadership style had the greatest relative impact. On the contrary, delegating, autocratic, and selling leadership styles had depressing effects on community development.

Since the ratings were high (68% or higher) for leadership styles, there seem to be a mix of leadership styles at play; that is, the officials likely have more than one dominant leadership style. This has to be taken into consideration when designing leadership and/or community development programs. Also, since constructing a 24-hour health facility, improvement of physical infrastructure, construction or improvement of an industrial park, locating a manufacturing company, locating a tier-1 automobile supplier, and locating a retail business seem to be very highly rated, these should be considered in a community development plan in the Black Belt counties in question. Locating a landfill in the community rated very poorly. The latter seems to have lost its previous popularity with distressed communities, and should not be considered as a path of development for these counties. Furthermore, social and educational factors, specifically, recreational facilities, summer classes or programs, after-school classes and line-item to improve academic performance should be part of a community development program in these counties. Also, elected leaders might want use more of democratic, participating, and telling leadership styles (in descending order) as these enhance community development, and shy away from delegating, autocratic, and selling leadership styles as these appear to depress community development. The paucity of empirical studies on leadership styles and community development makes contribution of this study worthwhile. At the very least, it shows that the democratic leadership style has the greatest impact on enhancing community development. Future studies are needed to validate the results of the study, and should include

increasing the sample size.

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