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Examining the Relationship Between Louisiana Principals' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Student Achievement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Louisiana Principals' self-efficacy beliefs and student achievement. This study was grounded in the research of Bandura's model of *triadic reciprocal causation* and more recent research on principals' self-efficacy beliefs. Using the Principals' Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) measures of principals' self-efficacy were collected and analyzed for (1) instructional leadership, (2) management, and (3) moral leadership.

Principals across the state of Louisiana were emailed a link to the PSES and were asked to provide the names of their schools and asked for the number of years they had served as principal at their current school. Principals with two or more years were allowed to continue and complete the PSES. Three hundred eleven principals completed the PSES. Two years of student achievement reports [indicating Assessment Indices (AI)], published by the Louisiana Department of Education, were available for 271 of the 311 respondents. Pearson correlational analyses were used to determine relationships between variables.

This study found no statistically significant relationships between management, and moral leadership efficacy and change in AI over a two-year period. However, there was a small ($p = 0.047$), but statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.010$) relationship between instructional leadership efficacy and change in AI over a two-year period.

The researcher recommends that the following steps be taken in future research seeking to determine the relationship between instructional leadership efficacy and change in AI: 1) exploration of data collection by means other than self-reporting, 2) use

of student-level value-added data rather than the cohort-level data available here, and 3)

use of a larger and more diverse sample of principals.

Keywords: Principals, self-efficacy beliefs, or principals' self-efficacy beliefs

CHAPTER 1

Examining the Relationship Between

Louisiana Principals' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Student Achievement

Although his work does not solely focus on school leadership, John Maxwell's (1995) book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, cites an axiom few would challenge, "…everything rises and falls on leadership" (p. viii). School leaders--more specifically, principals--are directly charged with improving America's schools. Over the past decade, there has been increased pressure to raise student achievement for every child, notwithstanding his/her socio-economic status (SES), limited English proficiency (LEP) status, ethnicity, or special education status. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that all students reach 100% proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014. In response to this pressure, a number of states bolstered their accountability measures to meet these requirements. Additionally, states have been granted the authority to mandate and fund minimum competency tests, develop more rigorous curricula, and audit student achievement in schools (Sergiovanni et al., 2004).

Given the increased federal and state demands for change, effective school leadership has become central to the success of standards-based reform (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003). Without a principal's leadership, efforts to improve student achievement are unlikely to succeed (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005).

Succeeding at the endeavor of improving schools by increasing student achievement is a daunting challenge. A principal's job has been described as complex and demanding, requiring a depth of professional knowledge and an array of skills and beliefs about how and why to act (Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 1996). There

is literature, that will be shared in subsequent paragraphs, to suggest that there are mixed perceptions by school leaders about the manifold challenges they face. There are some who embrace these challenges and are determined to succeed, and there are others who believe that there are certain factors or demographics beyond a principal's control that are critical determinants of student achievement (Paglis & Green, 2002). Perhaps more than ever before, principals know that in this age of high-stakes accountability, if a school does not consistently meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), parents will be given the option of choosing to enroll their children in other schools. Consequently, a school could forfeit essential funding and eventually close its doors. Yet, in spite of all of these demands, Duke (2004) reports that there are those school principals who are determined to lead their schools not only to meet, but to surpass the required federal and state high-stakes expectations. Duke further describes these leaders in detail as those who are committed to establishing a safe and orderly learning environment, building capacity of teachers, consistently using student data to inform decision-making, and increasing instructional time for students.   Leithwood and Strauss (2009) also found similar characteristics of successful school leaders from high-performing schools. Leithwood and Strauss refer to core leadership practices by principals: they in essence change teacher attitudes about teaching and learning and ultimately change the school culture. Additionally, a key finding in *the Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes* (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, et, al., 2009) was that effective school leaders were intent upon setting a clear direction for the school, improving teacher practices, promoting a stronger academic focus, and redesigning the organization of the school.

Researchers have and will continue to study the characteristics of effective school leaders, especially those leaders who have shown success despite more robust federal and state accountability systems. Clearly, from the studies most recently cited, there are certain characteristics of principals that are effective in raising student achievement; however, those characteristics are not prevalent amongst the larger population of school leaders. Hence, studies continue to emerge like those initiated by former Louisiana State Superintendent Paul Pastorek and Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen (2008), examining traits or behaviors of highly effective principals.

Which behaviors promote effective practice and which do not is worth a deeper dive in the field of educational research. There is a small body of emerging research—principals' self-efficacy— that may help to explain these differences (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). This study investigates a relatively unexplored body of research on principals' self-efficacy beliefs to attempt to explain the differences in performance under today's strict accountability policies and increased demand for higher student outcomes.

Principal Self-Efficacy

Principals' self-efficacy beliefs are especially interesting because early studies on self-efficacy have found it to have an impact upon an individual's level of aspiration, goal-setting, effort, adaptability, and persistence (Bandura, 1986; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The psychological concept of self-efficacy, from which principal's self-efficacy derives, has its origins in Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal causation model. This model explains the relationship between personal, environmental, and behavioral factors that influence one's actions. A principal's self-efficacy is a judgment of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action that will lead toward the attainment

of campus goals (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). McCormick (2001) further defines this construct as a principal's perceived capability to perform the cognitive and behavioral functions necessary to regulate group processes in relation to goal attainment. Bandura (2000) states that, "when faced with obstacles, setbacks, and failures, those who doubt their capabilities slacken their efforts, give up, or settle for mediocre solutions. Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities redouble their efforts to master the challenge" (p. 120).

Many believe that in order for our schools to improve, the school leader will be the key change agent to usher in new processes. Published studies have concluded that not only is the principal the key change agent, but the principal is the person ultimately responsible for improving student achievement and affecting positive school reform (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano, Walters & McNulty, 2005). In a seminal study on principal efficacy, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) concluded that the principal "sets the tone and direction for the school, initiates change, provides expertise, marshals resources, unifies partners and maintains effort" (p. 3). This research study will add to the growing body of knowledge regarding the concept of principal self-efficacy (Smith, Guarino, Strom, & Adams, 2006) and its relationship, if any, on student achievement.

Within the context of leadership, self-efficacy has been found to have a significant influence on analytic strategies, direction-setting, and subsequent organizational performance of managers (Paglis & Green, 2002; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Wood and Bandura (1989) found that, just as other leaders, principals are charged with developing strategies for goal attainment and setting the direction, or working

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jointly with superintendents to set the direction and establishment of an environment favorable to group performance (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005).

Developing and maintaining a strong sense of focus and persistence is also critical for principals to succeed at organizational goals (Wood and Bandura, 1989). Linking Bandura's social cognitive theory and leader efficacy, McCormick (2001) noted that, "Successful leadership involves using social influence processes to organize, direct, and motivate the actions of others. It requires persistent task-directed effort, effective task strategies, and the artful application of various conceptual, technical and interpersonal skills" (p. 28).

Mc Cormick (2001) also supports the idea that leadership self-efficacy is a critical cognitive variable that dictates and regulates leader functioning in dynamic school environments; however, very little is known about the efficacy beliefs of school leaders (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000) and their effect on student achievement. Although it is known that school leaders are indeed capable of having significant positive effects on student learning (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009; Silins & Mulford, 2002; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), more research needs to be done. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) report finding weak, but significant, effects of leader efficacy on one of two indicators of student learning and also acknowledge that more research is needed to justify claims about significant, direct, leadership effects on student learning. Other studies on leadership efficacy, as cited by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), have been conducted in non-school contexts. The ideal is to have more studies within the school environment. This type of efficacy research matters because a person's perceptions of self-efficacy are context-specific; as such, people's levels of efficacy vary based upon

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situations they encounter (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Consequently, a principal may feel efficacious to lead within a given context and inadequate to lead in another, depending upon their perceptions of similarities and/or differences of the two contexts.

Principals, like leaders/managers in other professions, must produce positive results, based upon pre-determined goals, by working with and through other people; specifically, teachers, students, parents and/or community members. As mentioned previously in this study, the role of the principal is ever-evolving and requires that successful principals maintain high levels of skill when working with others.

Another study, conducted by Imants and DeBrabander (1996), determined the importance of sense of efficacy to variables related to the quality of education such as student achievement gains, implementation of innovations, attitude to innovations and classroom management behavior. Their study, however, focused on both teachers' and principals' sense of efficacy regarding school-oriented tasks. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) studied this construct more in-depth and ultimately, as will be discussed in greater detail, developed an instrument to measure principals' self-efficacy beliefs. The instrument measures principals' self-efficacy beliefs related to instructional, management, and moral leadership.

This study acknowledges the critical role of the school principal, their efficacy, and the possible impact it may have on student achievement. However, a recent query in the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) on the topics, "Principal Efficacy," "Principals' Self-Efficacy," and "Principals' Sense of Efficacy", confirmed what has been concluded previously, the body of knowledge on this construct is limited. Literature searches were not limited to ERIC, but also included queries on familiar search engines

such as Google, Google Scholar, Yahoo, Bing and other electronic databases. Searches in stacks at university libraries and multiple educational journals in total yielded fewer than one dozen studies directly related to principal self-efficacy.

The Problem to be Addressed

The state of Louisiana boasts one of the nation's best educational accountability systems. In 2004, Louisiana was ranked 1st in accountability and standards, 5th in improving teacher quality, and 16th in equity of funding (Education Week, 2004). Although Louisiana is ranked high in accountability and standards, the state is ranked amongst the lowest in the country in K-12 achievement. Based upon national rankings, Louisiana earned an F which is down from a D- in 2011 (LDOE, 2011). The ranking is based upon the results from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading and mathematics. Although NAEP annually tests 4th and 8th graders, the overall ranking also was based upon graduation rates and Advanced Placement scores of students (LDOE, 2011). These data present the alarming context of low school performance in which this study takes place. Former Louisiana State Superintendent, Paul Pastorek, (LDOE, 2011), stated in a press release that the daunting challenge of improving student achievement in Louisiana is going to require "courageous leadership and immediate action at all levels…we are failing too many students." It could not be clearer that Louisiana faces a pressing task to increase student achievement. Schools in Louisiana must improve and it will take courageous, efficacious, principals to lead the charge within the context of a failing school system. While previously cited studies have focused on *how* successful school leaders have improved student outcomes, this study seeks to delve deeper into *why* some leaders are effective. Hopefully, by unraveling the

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self-efficacy beliefs of principals in Louisiana will shed light on which characteristics are related to improved student outcomes.

Research Questions

This research study is an examination of the relationship between student achievement and principals' sense of efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership. The *Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale* (PSES), developed by Tschannen-Moran & Garies (2004), was administered to Louisiana public school principals during the 2011-2012 school year. It assesses principals' self-efficacy in three domains: instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership. Student achievement data were collected from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) website.

The research questions guiding this study are the following:

1. What are the relationships of principals' instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy to total years experience as a principal, years experience as principal at current school, and two-year change in school assessment index (AI)?

2. How well do total years of experience as a principal, school socio-economic status as reflected by the percentage of free and reduced-price meals (FARM), and principal self-efficacy predict change in AI during the current principal's tenure?

Limitations and Delimitations

There are certain factors that may limit the findings of this study:

1. Self-reporting by principals could be problematic, according to Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002). Respondents tend to report in ways that will make them look as good as possible. Consequently, "they tend to under-report behaviors deemed inappropriate by researchers and to over-report behaviors viewed as appropriate" (p. 247).

2. The sample of participants is limited to public school principals who are in at least their 2nd year at the same school. Therefore, inferences cannot be made about the role of self-efficacy with respect to new principals or principals who have changed schools.

Sampling for this study was limited to public school principals in the state of Louisiana. Because this study is limited to public school principals in the state of Louisiana, the results may not apply to other regions or to nonpublic school settings.

Definition of Terms

Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP/*i*LEAP). The state achievement test that is administered to students in grades 3-12 in the spring to determine AYP according to federal guidelines and used to calculate school performance scores for each public school in the state of Louisiana.

No Child Left Behind Act. This 2001 Act required schools to establish standards-driven teaching and accountability for each state (Coffey & Lashway, 2002).

Principal. In this study the principal is the lead administrator of a public school.

Principals' Self Efficacy. Principals' beliefs in their capability to make a difference in the schools they lead, and to manage effectively the challenges they face.

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The Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) will be used to assess principals'
capabilities concerning instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership.

     Self-efficacy. As described by Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a personal belief
that one is able to do what it takes (plan, act) to accomplish a task at a particular level of
quality. Efficacy beliefs are not a trait of an individual, but rather an active and learned
system of beliefs held in context.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A full decade into the 21st century has passed and yet there remains one challenge regarding American education, it <u>must</u> improve. If American education is to improve, it will do so one student, one school, and one district at a time. Paramount to improving America's schools is having strong school leaders to facilitate the necessary school-level changes that must take place. Leaders do matter, and there is evidence that those in formal leadership roles (i.e., principals) have an effect on student learning (Leithwood & Wahlstrom, 2008) Yet, before narrowing down to the importance of school leaders, it is equally important to understand the national context that has issued the clarion call for improving student achievement in our schools.

Many educators cite the scathing review of American education--*A Nation at Risk* (1983)—as the impetus for the many reports that followed, all indicating the need for restructuring schools to improve public education in America. Also, over 40 years ago a federal paper was published that discussed the effectiveness of American education. The paper was funded by the U.S. Office of Education and written by James Coleman, a prominent education researcher. According to the Association for Effective Schools, Inc. (1996), Coleman's report (1966) concluded that public schools did not make a significant difference, and credited the student's family background as the main reason for student success in school. His findings proposed that children from poor families, lacking the prime conditions or values to support education, could not learn at the same level as their more affluent peers, regardless of the efforts of the school. Effective Schools Research emerged in response to this controversial paper.

Ronald Edmonds, then Director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University, responded vigorously. Edmonds, and others, refused to accept Coleman's report as conclusive, although they acknowledged that family background does indeed make a difference. They set out to find schools where children from low-income families were highly successful, and thereby prove that schools can and do make a difference.

Edmonds (1979), and other researchers such as Brookover and Lezotte (1991) looked at achievement data from schools in several major cities: schools where student populations were comprised of those from poverty backgrounds. Nationwide, they found schools where poor children were learning at high levels. Though these findings contradicted Coleman's conclusion, they (Edmonds, Brookover, Lezotte, and other school effectiveness researchers) were left without an answer to the question of why certain schools made a difference and others did not.

To answer this puzzling question, successful schools were compared with similar schools, in like neighborhoods, where children were learning at lower levels. Characteristics describing both types of schools were observed and documented. The basic conclusions of this comparative research were:

- Public schools can and do make a difference, even those comprised
  of students from poverty backgrounds.
- Children from poverty backgrounds can learn at high levels as a
  result of public schools (Lezotte, 1991).

Furthermore, there are unique characteristics and processes common to schools where all children are succeeding, regardless of family background. Because these characteristics, found in schools where student learning was high,

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are correlated with student success, they are called *correlates*. These correlates became the cornerstone of Effective Schools Research.

Lezotte (1991) states that correlates describing the critical characteristics found in each of the schools that were deemed effective possessed: (1) clear school mission, (2) high expectations for success, (3) instructional leadership, (4) frequent monitoring of student progress, (5) opportunity to learn or student time on task, (6) safe and orderly environment, and (7) positive home-school relations.

Interestingly, instructional leadership is mentioned as a key cog for an effective school, thus supporting Leithwood's claim above. In their study of *Effective versus Ineffective Schools: Observable Differences in the Classroom*, Teddlie, Kirby, and Stringfield (1989) define effective schools in terms of expected (student achievement) versus actual student achievement over a two-year period. Although their study focused primarily on teacher behaviors in their classrooms (at both effective and ineffective schools), it should be pointed out that they noted that the administrative styles of the principals at the two schools were "fundamentally different" (p. 16). The principal in the effective school "guarded the integrity of the classroom," was visible in classes, and, in some instances even taught classes.

Principals play a critical role in developing and fostering an effective learning community. Leithwood and Wahlstrom (2008) cite significant effects on student learning as a result of the school's leadership. Studies that reference school improvement make this point clear (Nicholson, Harris-John, & Schimmel, 2005). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) state that when school improvement is discussed, all arrows point to the school

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principal: "if you scratch the surface of an excellent school…you are likely to find an excellent principal" (p. 5). Drake and Roe (2002) call the principal, "the passport to success" (p. 3). Principals' leadership qualities and their behaviors are pivotal not only to the success of the students and teachers, but to the school community as a whole. One study cites that "a one standard deviation improvement in leadership practices is associated with an increase in average student achievement from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile…a statistically significant difference in achievement" (Walters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Therefore, the correlates and subsequent studies support that there is a link between effective leadership and student learning.

Theoretical Framework

The actions or behaviors of a principal are central to the development and maintenance of the teaching and learning environment within a school (Smith, 2005). According to Social Cognitive Theory (1986), behaviors of individuals are one component of the triadic reciprocal causation model. In this model, the environment, personal factors, and behaviors all influence one another (Bandura, 1997).

Social cognitive theory (SCT) originated from Social learning theory (SLT), which dates as far back as the early 1940s by Julian Rotter. Albert Bandura began publishing work on SCT in the early 1960s. SCT defines human behavior as triadic, dynamic, and reciprocal interactions of personal factors, behavior, and the environment (Bandura, 1977a; 1986; 1989). According to the SCT, an individual's behavior is uniquely determined by each of the aforementioned. Bandura (1977) states that those with a strong belief in their capabilities (efficacy) behave differently from people who have doubts about their own capabilities. People with low self-efficacy tend to avoid

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challenging tasks, have lower expectations and aspirations, and give up easily in the face of difficult tasks. This is the foundation of Bandura's (1986) conception of *reciprocal causation*. An example of this would be represented in a child who acts out in class (behavior) because s/he does not like (personal) going to school. This may sometimes manifest negative feelings by teachers toward the child because of the misbehaviors. These behaviors exhibited by the child force teachers and administrators to create a more restrictive environment for the child (and others like him/her).

The person-behavior interaction involves the bi-directional influences of one's thoughts, emotions, and biological properties and one's actions (Bandura, 1977a; 1986; 1989). Specifically, a person's expectations, beliefs, self-perceptions, goals, and intentions all contribute to one's behavior. However, the behavior that is acted out will in turn impact a person's thoughts and emotions. SCT also factors into account a person's sex, ethnicity, temperament, and genetic predisposition and the influences they have on behavior.

A bi-directional interaction also occurs between the environment and personal characteristics (Bandura, 1977a; 1986; 1989). In this process, human expectations, beliefs, and cognitive competencies are developed and modified by social influences and physical structures within the environment. These social influences can convey information and activate emotional reactions through such factors as modeling, instruction, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986).

The final interaction occurs between behavior and the environment. Bandura believes that people are both products and producers of their environment (Bandura, 1977a; 1986; 1989). A person's behavior will determine the aspects of the environment

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to which he or she is exposed, and behavior is, in turn, modified by that environment. A person's behavior can affect the way in which he or she experiences the environment through selective attention. Based on learned human preferences and competencies, humans select with whom they interact and the activities in which they participate from a vast range of possibilities. Human behavior also influences the environment, such as when an aggressive person creates a hostile environment. Thus, behavior determines which of the many potential environmental influences come into play and what forms they will take. In turn, the environment partly determines which forms of one's behavior are developed and activated (Bandura, 1989).

Social learning theory, social cognitive theory, and other related concepts were discussed in an effort to establish the underpinnings or theoretical framework of this study of principal self-efficacy. A principal's sense of efficacy is a judgment of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action in order to produce desired outcomes in the school he or she leads (Bandura, 1997). A principal's self-efficacy beliefs also impact aspects of his or her level of aspiration and goal-setting, effort, adaptability, and persistence (Bandura, 1986; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The discussion to ensue will focus not only on principal efficacy but on the broader concept of leadership efficacy.

Leadership and Collective Leadership Efficacy

Leadership self-efficacy (LSE) studies have been conducted to examine self-efficacy beliefs of leaders/managers and to determine if there exist antecedents that shape these beliefs and corresponding outcomes associated with self-efficacy beliefs (Nye, 2008). Data collected by Paglis and Green (2002) support the view that managers with

high LSE engage in more leadership attempts than those with lower LSE. Leadership attempts refer to the number of times a leader will directly engage his/her subordinates in an attempt to bring about a desired change in their behavior and/or thought process. Paglis and Green (2002) hypothesized that managers with a higher LSE would engage in more leadership attempts as opposed to those with a low LSE. Their findings were based upon data they collected from a study of a group managers in a non-education field and the results supported their hypothesis.

Leithwood and Mascall (2008) also studied leadership efficacy, but aimed to collect data regarding collective or shared leadership and its impact on student achievement. Collecting data from 2,570 teachers across 90 elementary and secondary schools in the United States, Leithwood and Mascall concluded that collective leadership efficacy accounted for significant variations in student achievement in language arts and mathematics.

An additional study on collective leadership efficacy was conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), entitled *Linking Leadership to Student Learning: The Contributions of Leader Efficacy*. The goal of this study was to understand better the causes and consequences of school leaders' efficacy and indirectly to observe its impact on student learning. Conducted with the participation of 96 principals and 2,764 teachers, the findings once again showed that leaders' collective efficacy wan an important link to student achievement.

Within the context of schools, principals are a key driver of any school improvement and reform efforts (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and Petzko (2002) found that a principal's leadership

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significantly impacts how a school faces challenges and whether or not a school achieves its desired results. The challenges can be viewed as those set forth by the NCLB Act of 2001 and the desired results: every child proficient by 2014. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) strongly support the notion that a principal's self-efficacy is paramount to his/her ability to meet the many demands and expectations of the position; unfortunately, principal efficacy has been largely unexplored.

Why Study Principal Self-Efficacy?

Generating self-efficacy beliefs is important, especially when considering triadic reciprocal causation, because of the impact these beliefs have on an individual's accomplishment of a specific task or goal attainment (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). For school principals, if the primary goal of school leadership is to increase student achievement, it stands to reason that those educators who have higher self-efficacy scores will be more inclined to improve student achievement.

This research study seeks to go further by examining if there is a relationship between a principals' self-efficacy and student achievement. See *Figure 1* below. More specifically this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the relationships of principals' instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy to total years experience as a principal, years experience as principal at current school, and two-year change in school assessment index (AI)?

2. How well do total years of experience as a principal, school socio-economic status as reflected by the percentage of free and reduced-price meals (FARM), and principal

self-efficacy predict change in Assessment Index during the current principal's tenure?

Conceptual Framework

Principal Self-Efficacy

Total Years of Experience as Principal

A

A. There is a statistically significant (*p*<.05) correlation between total years of experience as principal and principals' self-efficacy beliefs.

Years of Experience as Principal in Current School

B

B. There is a statistically significant (*p*<.05) correlation between years of experience as principal in current school and principals' self-efficacy beliefs.

C. There is a statistically significant (*p*<.05) correlation between percent of students receiving free and/or reduced meals (FARM) and change in assessment index during current principal's tenure.

FARM (% free/reduced lunch)

C

Change in Academic Index
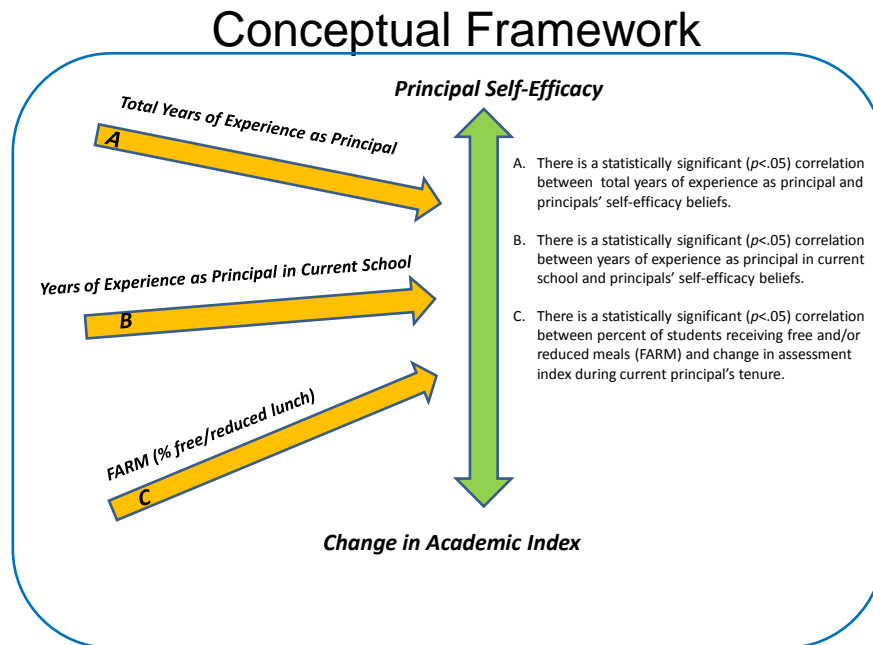
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

It should be noted that the literature is replete with empirical studies on teacher and student self-efficacy (e.g., Pajares, 1996; Parker, Guarine & Smith, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy, 1998); however, as mentioned several times previously, research relative to self-efficacy beliefs of school administrators is lacking (Smith, Guarino, Strom, & Adams, 2008). Another contribution this study will make to the body of collected knowledge in this field is that it will provide another opportunity to test the validity of the PSES, which has only been used in four other studies to date. The construct principal self-efficacy (PSE) has had a storied past of improper measurement because of the tools used to asses it (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This

study will examine school leaders' efficacy within the context of a very robust system of school accountability.

Louisiana's School Accountability System

The Louisiana Accountability System (LAS) provides annual School Performance Scores (SPS) to each school. The purpose of the SPS is to report how well schools are performing based upon student attainment on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (students in grades 4 and 8)/Graduate Exit Exam (students in grades 10-12) (LEAP/GEE) and the Integrated Louisiana Assessment Program (students in grades 3, 5, 6, 7 & 9) (iLEAP): Louisiana's statewide testing programs. School attendance and dropout data are also used in the final calculations of the SPS. A performance label is then assigned to a school once the final SPS has been given. For the purposes of this study, the Assessment Index (AI), which is inclusive of all components of the SPS, but does not include school attendance and dropout data, was used.

A more in-depth look at AI shows that it is comprised of the overall student performance on the LEAP/*i*LEAP state-wide assessments. Students taking the LEAP/*i*LEAP receive a scaled score that corresponds to a performance *label* (i.e., Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, or Unsatisfactory). The AI reflects student performance on the LEAP/*i*LEAP in English Language Arts (ELA), Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science. All students receive *subject-test index points*. Total points are added for each student, and multiplied by a unit weight. A unit weight is 0.5, 1.0 or 2.0 and is dependent upon the student's grade-level and the tested subject. Using the previously-mentioned values, it is possible to calculate an AI for a K-8 school using the students' performance label on each test. For example, subject-test index points are

tabulated for each grade and subject. Unit weights are assigned and multiplied by the

total subject-test index points at each grade, and for each subject; thus, yielding a

weighted subject-test index score. The K-8 AI equals the weighted subject-test index

score divided by 28. *Incentive points* may also be added to the subject-test index points

prior to multiplying the unit weights if a 4th or 8th grade student unsuccessfully tested

(e.g., during the Spring of 2009), repeated the grade, retested (Spring 2010) and scored

one or more achievement levels higher. The school would receive 50 incentive points for

that student.

The AI for grades 9-12 is calculated using a very similar formula; however, there

are no incentive points and the previous year's dropout rates are included in the overall

weighted score.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth examination of literature related to effective

schools, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs, leadership and principal efficacy.

One instrument that has been found to be reliable and valid is the one designed by

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004). The instrument has only been used in a few studies

since its inception and, therefore, no clear patterns have emerged. A recent listing of

ERIC queries has yielded over 3,500 entries on efficacy research. However, a similar

search on principal efficacy significantly lacks in comparison. Tschannen-Moran &

Gareis (2004) state, "the study of principals' self-efficacy beliefs is a promising new line

of research. Both antecedents to a high sense of efficacy, as well as the outcomes related

to strong efficacy beliefs of school leaders are likely to be fruitful avenues to study" (p.

583). This study is an attempt to add to this growing body of knowledge.

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CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in detail the research design, sample, instrumentation, methods, and data analysis procedures used in the study. This is a descriptive study investigating the relationship of public school principals' self-efficacy ratings to student achievement in Louisiana schools as measured by changes in the Assessment Index (AI) which is based on statewide assessments.

A review of the literature on leader efficacy revealed that individuals with a strong sense of efficacy have been proven to possess higher confidence in their ability to accomplish challenging goals (Moak, 2010). Principals with a higher sense of efficacy persist in the pursuit of their goals and are more flexible and willing to adapt strategies that will bring about the necessary changes to improve their schools (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The construct of principal self-efficacy may provide a deeper understanding of the impact the more efficacious leader has on student achievement and open up possibilities for improving student achievement in the future. Unfortunately, efficacy research in education almost solely has been focused on teacher self-efficacy.

Research Design

This study uses a correlational design relating principals' self-efficacy, as measured on the *Principal Self-efficacy Scale* (PSES) and student achievement data, as measured by *Assessment Index* (AI). Principal self-report data were used in measuring principals' perceived self-efficacy in the areas of instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy. Published Louisiana Department of

Education (LDOE) student achievement data reports indicating Assessment Indices were used to measure student achievement. Principals' results from the survey alongside assessment indices (AI) for their respective schools were used to determine if relationships exist between their perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management, and/or moral leadership, and student achievement in their schools. As such, it is appropriate to use a correlational method of analysis. Pearson correlation analyses were used to determine relationships between variables. Correlational analysis techniques allow, for the testing of many variables and the relationships between them (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996). As the variance increases between the variables, researchers are better able to predict scores from the independent to the dependent variables (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Participants

The major purpose of this quantitative study is to determine if there exists a relationship between principal self-efficacy and student achievement in Louisiana schools. More specifically, elementary (schools with grades 3-8) and high school (schools with grades 9-12) principals were asked to participate in this study. Student achievement was measured using the state-reported AI. All public elementary and high school principals with the designated grade configurations were invited to participate in the study. In order to achieve sufficient power to conduct the multivariate analyses, a minimum sample of 300 principals was desired. The sample was a convenience sample of elementary and high school principals in Louisiana. For purposes of this study, elementary school was defined as any school that serves 3rd grade students but does not

serve students above 9th grade. According to the LDOE Website, the directory showed there were 1,294 principals in the state of Louisiana in 2011-2012.

Permission was granted to use the Principal Self-Efficacy Survey (PSES) by the author (Appendix A). Principals received a link to the survey via email. Survey respondents were assured confidentiality of their responses. LDOE *School Codes* were used to sort data by district and school. Four hundred seventy-two principals responded to the survey and 311 completed all survey items. Collected data remained in an electronic format, not available to anyone other than the researcher and his advisors. No district, school, or principal identifying information is reported. Data for the dependent variable—Assessment Index—was obtained from the LDOE. It should also be noted that AI data over a two-year period (2011-2009) was only available for 271 schools out of the 311 schools that were represented by principals' responses. Principals were asked to provide information regarding their tenure at their current school before taking the PSES. Principals who were at their current school for two or more years were allowed to complete the survey.

Instrumentation

The PSES is an 18-item, Likert-scale measure that assesses principals' self-perceptions of their capability to accomplish various aspects of school leadership (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The tools used previously to measure the construct of PSE have been problematic and inconsistent (Moak, 2010). Using responses to scenarios related to principalship, Hillman (1986) first tried to measure principal self-efficacy beliefs. Similar to two other measures used around that time (Guskey, 1981; Rose and Medway, 1981) Hillman's instrument suffered from the same flaws: a labor-

intensive format and the existence of conceptual inconsistencies. These flaws existed

because the conceptual foundation of the instrument was based upon attribution theory

(Weiner, 1985) and not social cognitive theory (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy,

2001). Although it was the belief of some researchers that attribution theory can

influence efficacy perceptions, attribution theory is a different construct from self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The main difference, as pointed out by Zimmerman and

Cleary (2006), is that self-efficacy judgments are task and content-specific and focus

solely on ones' perceptions of capability. Whereas attribution theory attempts to explain

the cause of an event or a behavior (e.g., why do people do the things that they do), the

social cognitive theory posits that one's behavior, cognition, and other personal factors,

and environmental influences all influence each other bidirectionally (Bandura, 1996).

Self-efficacy beliefs not only derive from this model, but provide a more practical means

of analyzing the behaviors of principals within a specific school context.

Imants and De Brabander (1996) developed a principal efficacy instrument.

Using a Likert scale to record their responses, principals and teachers measured their

perceived self-efficacy on school and student-oriented tasks, respectfully. There was no

substantial evidence to support the validity of this measure (Moak, 2010).

Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2004) studied 104 principals and assistant principals

in Ohio using another scale developed in 1996 by Dimmock and Hattie. Similar to

previous instruments, this one contained a series of vignettes and administrators had to

score their responses using a 10-point Likert scale. Originally developed and

disseminated in Australia, the instrument was adapted to include scenarios more tailored

to those experiences in American schools. Although the instrument did have promise, the

Dimmock and Hattie (1996) instrument gained no traction due to low commonalities and low item-total correlations (Nye, 2008).

As the search for an appropriate instrument continued, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) developed an instrument on the platform of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). This newly-developed instrument was an 18-item scale that assessed both the principal's level of competence and difficulty of the task to complete. The purpose of the TSES was to capture a teacher's perceived assessment of their level of competence and difficulty to perform multiple tasks. The purpose of the PSES was similar, except its focus is on principals. The original PSES was a 50-item survey that captured principals' responses, to various aspects of their role. The items were based largely on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. The instrument was proven to be both a valid and reliable measure of principals' sense of efficacy. Hence, this instrument is being used for this research study to measure principal self-efficacy of principals in Louisiana Schools.

The construct validity of the PSES was tested by correlating the instrument to other known constructs in an attempt to gauge if anticipated relationships would emerge. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) found that principals' sense of efficacy was significantly, negatively related to work alienation.

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) found that, similar to the findings of Dimmock and Hattie (1996), students' SES and gender within a school had no significant relationship to a principal's sense of efficacy beliefs. White principals, however, did report a slightly higher sense of efficacy than black principals ($r = 0.09$, $p < 0.05$).

The PSES asks participants to, "…respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position." (p. 1). All survey items begin with the following stem: "In your current role as principal, to what extent can you…" Participants respond to each item by rating themselves using the following nine-point scale: 1= none at all; 3 = very little; 5 = some degree; 7 = quite a bit; and 9 = a great deal.

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) reported three subscales that emerged following a factor analysis of the original 50-item scale:

- Principals' Sense of Efficacy for Instruction (questions: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9);

- Principals' Sense of Efficacy for Management (questions: 3, 11, 12, 15, 17 and 18): and

- Principals' Sense of Efficacy for Moral Leadership (5, 8, 10, 13, 14, and 16).

Data Analysis Procedures

Bivariate correlations were calculated for each research question to determine relationships between the independent and dependent variables. All alpha levels were set at 0.05. The following research hypotheses were used to answer the two research questions posed:

Research Question 1: What are the relationships of principals' instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy to total years experience as principal at current school, and two-year change school assessment index (AI)?

The related research hypotheses are:

a. There is a statistically significant ($p < .05$) correlation between total years of experience as principal and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership.

b. There is a statistically significant ($p < .05$) correlation between years of experience as principal in current school and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership.

c. There is a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between principals' perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy, and the change in AI over a two-year period.

Pearson r correlations were used to test all of these hypotheses.

Research Question 2: How well do total years of experience as a principal, school socio-economic status as reflected by the percentage of free and reduced-price meals (FARM), and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership predict change in AI during the current principal's tenure?

The related research hypothesis is:

a. Principal experience, percentage of FARM, and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership will significantly predict variation in AI.

This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Data

This chapter presents an analysis of the data—assessment indices and principals'
self-efficacy beliefs--for each research question presented in this dissertation. Each
principal in the state of Louisiana (1,294), according to the 2011-2012 roster, was
emailed the PSES and asked to respond via an electronic questionnaire which they
accessed through a link into *Qualtrics*. Although emails were sent to principals whose
names appeared on the LDOE database for 2009-2010, the researcher noted that 143
names of principals that appeared on this roster did not appear on the 2011-2012 roster.
It should also be noted that 54 schools appear on the 2011-2012 roster that were not on
the 2009-2010 list. As such, the sample of potential participants in this study was
decreased by 197 (to 1,097) eligible participants. Four hundred seventy-two principals
responded to the survey. Principals with less than two years experience at their current
school were not included in the sample. Those who responded "less than a year" (5
principals) or "1 year" (58 principals) were automatically thanked for their participation
and not allowed to respond to other sections of the survey. Hence, of the 472 principals,
63 were ineligible to participate because of their limited years of experience. Of the 409
principals remaining, 98 surveys were incomplete and could not be used. In all, 311
surveys were completed. However, because AI data were only available for 271 schools,
the size of the sample was again decreased (by 40 participants). Because this study
analyzes change in AI, only those principals with at least two years of student data during
their tenure at the school were allowed to participate. Prior to taking the PSES,
participants were provided with the purpose of the study and were asked to answer

demographic questions designed by the researcher and attached to the front cover of the PSES.

Email addresses were obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education and local education agencies' (LEA) websites. Participation was strictly voluntary. Collected data remained in an electronic format, not available to anyone other than the researcher and his advisors. No district, school, or principal identifying information is reported. Although principals provided the names of their schools, they received written notice that the information collected would remain confidential and would not be reported. Data for the dependent variable—Assessment Index—was obtained from the LDOE.

As previously mentioned, participants were asked to provide their total years of experience as a principal (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10+); to select the name of their school (from a drop-down menu); and provide the number of years they had been principal at their current school (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10+). Additional demographic information (type of school: elementary, middle or high and AI data) was taken from the LDOE website.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were reviewed and analyzed as percentages. A quantitative research design was chosen as the means to determine if a relationship existed between principals self-efficacy beliefs for instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership as self-reported by respondents and the AI from spring 2009-2011 test results.

As reported by respondents, the majority of principals had substantial experience. One hundred eighty-six (or 69%) of principals had six or more years as principal. See Table 1.

Table 1

Total Years of Experience as Principal

Years of Experience	*n*	Percentage
2	12	4.4
3	18	6.6
4	34	12.5
5	21	7.7
6	20	7.4
7	16	5.9
8	21	7.7
9	13	4.8
10+	116	42.8
Total	271	100.0

Demographic information collected from respondents revealed that 145 (or 54%) of principals have served as principal at their current school for six or more years. See Table 2.

Table 2

Total Years in Current School

Total Years in Current School	n	Percentage
2	15	5.5
3	30	11.1
4	47	17.3
5	34	12.5
6	28	10.3
7	17	6.3
8	20	7.4
9	10	3.7
10 +	70	25.8
Total	271	100.0

Data retrieved from the LDOE website showed that 148 survey respondents (54.6%) work in elementary schools (grades K-5) and 123 (45.4%) work in middle/high schools (grades 6-12). This insight will help to frame the context of subsequent findings of this research study. See Table 3.

Table 3

School Level

School Level	n	Percentage
Elementary	148	54.6
Middle/High	123	45.4
Total	271	100.0

Female principals overwhelmingly reported higher response rates than male principals. One hundred seventy-four (64%) of respondents were females. See Table 4.

Table 4

Gender

Gender	n	Percentage
0	174	64.2
1	97	35.8
Total	271	100.0

0=female; 1= male

Two hundred seventy-one participants completed the survey and had corresponding AI for a two-year period (2011-2009). Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations for principals on the three self-efficacy sub-categories on the PSES. The mean of responses to questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9 produce an *instructional leadership efficacy* score. Responses to questions 5, 8, 10, 13, 14 and 16 produce a *moral leadership efficacy* score. Responses to questions 3, 11, 12, 15, 17 and 18) produce a *management efficacy* score.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Efficacy Subscales

Efficacy Subscales	*n*	Mean	SD
Instructional Leadership Efficacy	271	8.14	0.73
Management Efficacy	271	7.45	1.15
Moral Leadership Efficacy	271	8.06	0.85
Total PSES Scores	271	7.88	0.79

Range = 1 (lowest score) to 9 (highest score)

Mean scores for items of the subscale, instructional leadership efficacy, ranged from 7.51 (question 7—to what extent can you raise student achievement) to 8.52 (question 2—to what extent can you generate enthusiasm for shared vision).   The mean scores from this subscale represent the highest of all the others. See Table 6 for more detailed information regarding responses to each question.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Instructional Leadership Efficacy

Questions Corresponding to Instructional Leadership Efficacy*	*n*	Mean	SD
Q1. Facilitate Student Learning	271	8.28	0.95
Q2. Generate Enthusiasm for Shared Vision	271	8.52	0.80
Q4. Manage Change	271	8.05	1.07
Q6. Positive Learning Environment	271	8.49	0.78
Q7. Raise Student Achievement	271	7.51	1.32
Q9. Motivate Teachers	271	7.97	1.02

*A copy of the PSES can be retrieved from
http://mxtsch.people.wm.edu/ResearchTools/PSE_OMR.pdf

Mean scores for the items of the subscale, management efficacy, ranged from 7.08 (question 11—to what extent can you control of daily schedule) to 7.69 (question 3— to what extent can you handle time demands). The results shown in Table 7 are the lowest means of all three efficacy subscales. It is not surprising, however, that these results are aligned with research from other studies that suggest that one of the main reasons many qualified principal aspirants shun school leadership is because of an unmanageable range of responsibilities that are required to perform the job (Wallace Foundation, 2003).

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Management Efficacy

Questions Corresponding to Management Efficacy	*n*	Mean	SD
Q3. Handle Time Demands	271	7.69	1.40
Q11. Control of Daily Schedule	271	7.08	1.59
Q12. Shape Policies and Procedures	271	7.44	1.55
Q15. Paperwork	271	7.47	1.44
Q17. Cope with Stress	271	7.48	1.50
Q18. Prioritize Among Competing Demands	271	7.56	1.42

Mean scores for items of the subscale, moral leadership efficacy, ranged from 7.79 (question 10— to what extent can you promote prevailing community values in school) to 8.31 (question 14— to what extent can you promote acceptable behavior among students). That most principals feel highly efficacious in their role to promote acceptable student behavior is also a promising finding of this set of data. Although there is limited research about what effective leaders do well that help to develop the

disciplinary climate of the school (Leithwood, Paten, & Jantzi 2010), there is some

evidence that strong principal leadership in this area is imperative, as noted by

Leithwood, Patten and Jantzi (2010) citing Benda (2000). "The principal is the most

potent factor in determining school climate." (p.5). A positive school climate helps to

support teachers in their efforts to provide quality instruction for students (Benda, 2000).

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for Moral Leadership Efficacy

Questions Corresponding to Moral Leadership Efficacy	*n*	Mean	SD
Q5. Promote School Spirit Among Students	271	8.23	0.98
Q8. Positive Image of School in Media	271	7.96	1.34
Q10. Promote Prevailing Community Values in School	271	7.79	1.34
Q13. Effectively Handle Discipline	271	7.94	1.31
Q14. Acceptable Behavior Among Students	271	8.31	1.00
Q16. Promote Ethical Behavior Among Staff	271	8.12	1.07

Correlations were calculated for each of the predictors--total years of experience as a

principal, years of experience as a principal at the current school, and percentage of

FARM. Conclusions regarding the strength of the relationships found through data

analyses are based on Cohen's (1988) research. More specifically,

Cohen recommended using the following guidelines:

- Small Correlation $r = 0.10$ to 0.29 or $r = -0.10$ to -0.29

- Medium Correlation $r = 0.30$ to 0.49 or $r = -0.30$ to -0.49

- Large Correlation $r = 0.50$ to $0.1.0$ or $r = -0.50$ to -1.0

Research Question 1

What are the relationships of principals' instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy to total years experience as a principal, years of experience as principal at current school, and two-year change in school assessment index (AI)?

Hypothesis A: There is a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between total years of experience as principal and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership.

Table 9 shows the relationships between principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy, and their total years of experience as a principal. As shown in Table 9 there were no statistically significant correlations.

Table 9

Correlations for Self-Efficacy and Total Years as Principal

		Total Years as Principal	Instructional	Moral	Management
Total Years as Principal	*r*	1	0.045	0.068	0.011
	p		0.465	0.265	0.851
Instructional	*r*	0.045	1	0.724	0.627
	p	0.465		0.000	0.000
Moral	*r*	0.068	0.724	1	0.624
	p	0.265	0.000		0.000

		Total Years as Principal	Instructional	Moral	Management
Management	*r*	0.011	0.627	0.624	1
	p	0.851	0.000	0.000	

Hypothesis B: There is a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between years of experience as principal in current school and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership.

Table 10

Correlations for Self-Efficacy and Years as Principal in Current School

		Years as Principal in Current School	Instructional	Moral	Management Efficacy
Years as Principal in Current School	*r*	1	0.015	0.079	0.037
	p		.804	0.196	0.545
Instructional	*r*	0.015	1	0.724	0.627
	p	0.804		0.000	0.000
Moral	*r*	0.079	0.724	1	0.624
	p	0.196	0.000		0.000
Management Efficacy	*r*	0.037	0.627	0.624	1
	p	0.545	0.000	0.000	

As shown in Table 10, there is no significant correlation between principals' perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy and their years of experience at their current school.

Hypothesis C states, there is a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between principals' perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy, and the change in AI over a two-year period. Table 11 shows the correlations that were calculated to determine the relationship and no statistically significant relationships were found at the management and moral leadership levels. However, there was a statistically significant relationship between instructional leadership efficacy and the dependent variable. More specifically, there is a small, but statistically significant, correlation ($r = 0.102$, $p = 0.047$) between instructional leadership efficacy and difference in AI over a two-year period.

Table 11

Correlations for Self-Efficacy and Difference in AI over a two-year period (2011-2009)

		Instructional	Moral	Management Efficacy	Difference in AI (2011-2009)
Instructional	*r*	1	0.724	0.627	0.102*
	p		0.000	0.000	0.047
Moral	*r*	0.724	1	0.624	0.044
	p	0.000		0.000	0.235
Management Efficacy	*r*	0.627	0.624	1	0.039
	p				
	r	0.000	0.000		0.264
Difference in AI (2011-2009)	*r*	0.102*	.044	0.039	1
	p	0.047	0.235	0.264	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed).

Research Question 2

How well do total years of experience as a principal, school socio-economic status as reflected by the percentage of free and reduced-price meals (FARM), and principal self-efficacy predict change in Assessment Index during the current principal's tenure? Analysis for this question, more specifically, its related hypothesis—total years experience as a principal, FARM percentage, and PSE (instructional, management, and moral) will significantly predict variation in AI—was conducted using multiple regression (see Table 12).

The data show no statistically significant differences in AI based upon principals' experience, FARM percentage, and PSE. None of the standardized betas were significant.

Table 12

Regression Analysis: Instructional, Management, Moral,
Total Years as Principal, Total Years in Current School, and FARM % as predictors of
change in AI (2011-2009)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.147[a]	.022	.003	7.54674

a. Predictors: (Constant), Instructional, Management, Moral, Total Yrs. Prin., and Yrs. Current School
b. Dependent variable: Difference in AI (2011-2009)

Table 12 (continued)

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	-4.682	5.672		-0.826	0.410
Years as Principal;;Current School	-0.370	0.264	-0.133	-1.402	0.162
Total Years Exp. As Principal	0.396	0.258	.145	1.537	0.126
Instructional	1.484	0.967	0.144	1.535	0.126
Moral	-0.450	0.838	-0.051	-0.538	0.591
Management	-0.112	0.546	-0.017	-0.205	0.838
FARM %	-0.006	0.022	-0.016	-0.259	0.796

a. Predictors: (Constant), Instructional, Management, Moral, Total Yrs. Prin., and Yrs. Current School

b. Dependent variable: Difference in AI (2011-2009)

Summary

This chapter presented descriptive data for key variables and analyses of the two research questions. Using the Pearson product-moment correlation to assess whether or not a relationship existed between variables, it was found that a small, but statistically significant relationship was noted between instructional leadership efficacy and change in AI over a two-year period (2011-2009). The hypothesized ability of the efficacy subscales to predict change in AI was not supported by regression analysis.

CHAPTER 5

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Pajares (2001) concluded that unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Principals must persevere and stay committed to the daunting challenge of increasing student achievement despite the ever-increasing pressure associated with federal, state, and local accountability demands and consequences.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the body of self-efficacy research, more specifically, principal self-efficacy. The two research questions presented by this study focused on relationships between principals' self-efficacy beliefs in instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership. School socio-economic status, principals' total years of experience, and years of experience as principal at their current school all were examined. In an effort to answer these research questions, the researcher employed correlational analyses, including multiple regression procedures. This chapter presents findings, conclusions, and policy recommendations based upon analyses that were conducted.

Findings

The first research question asked if there exist relationships between principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership, and total years of experience as principal, years of experience at current school, percentage of FARM, and school assessment index. Only one variable was found to have a statistically significant relationship with the three self-efficacy subscales.

An analysis was conducted for Hypothesis A to determine if there exists a statistically significant ($p < .05$) correlation between total years of experience as principal and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership. Although each of the three efficacy subscales was tested against the variable, the analysis revealed no statistically significant relationships.

An analysis was conducted for Hypothesis B to determine if there exists a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between years of experience as principal in current school and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management, and moral leadership. Once again, the tests yielded no statistically significant relationships.

An analysis was conducted for Hypothesis C to determine if there exists a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between principals' perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy, management efficacy, and moral leadership efficacy, and the change in AI over a two-year period. Although each of the three efficacy subscales was tested against the variable, the analysis revealed no statistically significant relationships for two of the subscales: management efficacy and moral leadership efficacy. The relationship between instructional leadership efficacy and change in AI over a two-year period was found to be small ($p = 0.047$), yet statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.010$), accounting for 1.0% of the variance. However, this relationship has little or no practical significance (Cohen, 1988).

The second research question asked, how well do total years of experience as a principal, the percentage of FARM, and principals' self-efficacy beliefs predict change in AI during the current principal's tenure? The tested hypothesis: principals' experience,

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percentage of FARM, and principals' sense of self-efficacy in instructional leadership, management and moral leadership will significantly predict variation in AI. None of the variables were significant predictors of change in schools' AI.

Conclusions

Principals' self-efficacy beliefs, as cited earlier in this study, is an emerging construct that has not been studied as much as the construct of teacher self-efficacy. This study set out to identify relationships between Louisiana principals' self-efficacy beliefs and student achievement as determined by the statewide assessment administered to students in grades 3-12 during the spring 2009 through 2011. All of the analyses except one (Hypothesis C: instructional leadership efficacy), yielded no statistically significant relationships. The one relationship that was discovered ($p = 0.047$), proved to be very small (Cohen 1988).

Interestingly, a closer review of the descriptive statistics of this study show that principals who participated in this study have very high perceptions of self-efficacy. Instructional leadership efficacy revealed its lowest mean score (M =7.51) when principals were asked to respond to the question, "to what extent can you raise student achievement," and the highest mean score (M=8.52) when asked, "to what extent can you generate enthusiasm for a shared vision." Overall, a conclusion can be drawn that the principals in this study feel confident in their capabilities as instructional leaders. Having a high self-confidence, or as reported in the findings of this study, high self-efficacy beliefs, may not be a negative characteristic of a school leader. High or low, efficacy ratings have been shown to be a critical variable to help researchers better understand effects in most organizations (Leithwood, 2008). McCormick (2001) supports the fact

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that a leader's self-efficacy is a critical variable that regulates leader functioning in a dynamic school environment. Leithwood (2008) quotes McCormick when discussing the importance of leadership efficacy and student learning, "Every major review of the leadership literature lists self-confidence as an essential characteristic for effective leadership." (p. 23).

Although leaders in this study reported high self-efficacy ratings (especially on the instructional leadership efficacy subscale), of the 271 respondents with two or more years of AI data, exactly 100 (or 37% of) schools posted negative AI growth from the 2008-2009 to the 2009-1010 school year. An observation of the data from the same sample revealed that over a two-year period (school years 2008-2009 to 2010-2011), 91 (or 34% of) schools also posted negative AI growth. In each case, over a third of the respondents, while boasting high perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy, do not have commensurate student outcome data. In an attempt to delve deeper into an understanding of these statistics, the question is raised regarding the reliability of self-reported data and whether or not these data can be deemed valid.

In their study of self-reported data, or more specifically, self-reporting bias, Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002) concluded that accurate measures of organizational data are difficult to assess, yet essential for the field. Research grounded in self-reported data is often used because of its feasibility to obtain responses. Sackett and Larson (1990) found that over a third of all research studies published in journals was questionnaire-based. Further citing the work of Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002), researchers who rely solely on self-reported data as their means to understand organizational behavior have had their results to come under attack and criticism for two

primary reasons: (1) self-reports are subject to many kinds of response bias (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Donaldson, Thomas, & Graham, 2002; Graham, Collins, Donaldson, & Hansen, 1993; Schwartz, 1999; Stone et al., 2002), and (2) inferences about correlational and causal relationships may be inflated by the problem of common method variance (Borman, 1991; Donaldson, Thomas, Graham, Au, & Hansen, 2000; Spector, 1994).

Self-report bias is simply a participant's attempt to respond in a manner that makes his or her results look favorable to the researcher. Therefore, respondents will typically under-report behaviors deemed undesirable and, conversely, over-report behaviors viewed as desirable. Podsakoff and Organ (1996) refer to this phenomenon as the social desirability problem for researchers using self-report data via questionnaires. Podsakoff and Organ (1996) suggest that certain responses to certain items appear more socially desirable than others, while others can even appear to be more ego-flattering. A final point to underscore is that to some respondents, the underlying premise, particularly in organizational research behavior, is the belief (by the respondents) that their employer in some way could gain access to their responses (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002).

There are no easy remedies or quick fixes to this problem. Soliciting and using self-report data for research purposes is a technique that will not be discontinued anytime soon (Podsakoff and Organ, 1996). Some research studies report that not only are self-reports indispensable in many research contexts, but they are practical (Gupta & Beehr, 1982; Sims, 1979) and reflect a more accurate estimate of the population (Howard, Maxwell, Weiner, Boynton and Rooney, 1980). However, Podsakoff and Organ (1996) offer possible suggestions for mitigating some of the challenges associated with self-

reporting bias. Two possible suggestions include the use of multiple measures to obtain

data and aggregating the data from a larger unit of analysis.

Did the results found by this researcher support the claims of the aforementioned

studies? Were principals inclined to fall prey to self-report bias? One could argue that

perhaps they did. Perhaps principals felt as though the results of their individual survey

responses, although confidential, were not anonymous and could perhaps be reported to

their employers. Moak (2010), employing a different methodology, used the same

instrument to assess principals' efficacy beliefs and the effects of those beliefs on student

achievement. Her results in corresponding categories for instructional leadership efficacy

(M = 7.5) and overall efficacy scores (M = 7.2) also reflected high self-perceptions of

school leaders.

Before attributing the results of this study to one very viable phenomenon, namely

self-reporting bias, there may be another point to be considered, a point that is closely

aligned with the theoretical framework that serves as the underpinning for this research:

triadic reciprocal causation. One of the premises of this model, as noted through the

research of Tschannen-Moran (2004), Hoy (2007) and Moak (2010) is that self-efficacy

beliefs are "based on self-perception of competence rather than actual level of

competence" (p. 946) (Bandura,1997). Bandura (1986) states that how a person thinks,

believes and feels will have an impact on how they behave. It is apparent that the

principals in this study and a similar study (Moak, 2010) feel very confident in their

abilities to lead instructionally, managerially, and morally. The question that still lingers

is whether or not these feelings and/or beliefs positively affect behavior and,

subsequently, student outcomes. Are positive self-perceptions related to increased

student outcomes? Protheroe (2008) cites the research findings of Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) that suggest that collective efficacy beliefs of teachers have been shown to improve student achievement. Albeit, for the purposes of this study, efficacy beliefs of principals, have not shown similar promise.

Recommendations

Jimmy Gutterman (2007) cites Norton Grubb in his report, "Why are Principals Leaving?" Not only are principals charged with the day-to-day operations of their schools, but they must also be qualified instructional leaders (i.e., setting curricular goals, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers). For this reason, one of many reported by Norton, the necessity to develop principals' efficacy beliefs is paramount. Sadly, many principals are leaving the profession, and a review of the literature has shown how important their role is to developing, implementing, and sustaining positive changes within a school. One aspect of the data found by this researcher can be beneficial to the emerging body of research conducted around this construct. Many of the problems principals are experiencing in schools center around the day-to-day management of multiple tasks. Findings from this study have shown that management efficacy produced the lowest mean score (M = 7.45). On a 9-point scale a mean score of 7.45 is still fairly high. It could possibly be an area of further exploration for district leaders.   More specifically, how can districts build better support structures to help principals mange more efficiently? There is growing literature to support models of differentiated school leadership (Duke, Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2007), a promising framework to help principals to overcome the many managerial challenges school leaders face in high-poverty, low-performing schools. Hopefully the findings from this and other studies can

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bring more attention to this area as a possible way to further support principals as they tackle the day-to-day challenges of their work.

Directions for Future Research

Principal self-efficacy is an emerging, and promising construct. Whether or not it can be used as a predictor of AI could not be statistically determined from this study. As school leadership roles continue to evolve, especially in light of the increasing demands of federal, state, and local accountability, greater emphasis needs to be placed on helping principals become more efficacious in their job performance. Although the results of this study were not as expected, there are a few recommendations that may be of value for future, similar studies.

A larger, more robust sample could possibly help to determine whether there is a true relationship between instructional leadership efficacy and change in AI. This type of study could also benefit from having a larger sample, over varied geographical regions outside of Louisiana, but maybe in a region with similar FARM, similar principals' demographic data, or similar statewide school accountability measures.

Perhaps study of this construct could further be developed by having teachers to rate the effectiveness of their principals alongside principals' ratings on the PSES and student achievement data, in an effort to mitigate some of the challenges associated with self-reporting. This study did not investigate the self-efficacy ratings of charter and traditional school principals separately, but by studying differences in their self-efficacy beliefs, we may begin to understand this construct more in-depth. What about principals in private or parochial schools? What makes one group of principals have higher self-efficacy beliefs without corresponding student results; contrastingly, why do others have

high self-efficacy beliefs and the student results to corroborate those beliefs? Answers to these questions through further research could have tremendous implications for professional development training for inservice and pre-service principals and also in principal preparation programs. As more and more efforts are underway to develop nation certifications for school leaders (Archer, 2002), this body of research can be useful in efforts to proceed with helping develop stronger, more effective school leaders.

Future Use of Value-Added Data

One final thought for consideration is the newly-adopted Louisiana Act No. 54, which will be enacted during the 2012-2013 school year. Act 54 requires that all educators—teachers and administrators—to be evaluated formally, annually. Under previous law, educators would receive one formal evaluation every three years, and an annual, informal evaluation. Fifty percent of their formal evaluation, under Act 54, will be based upon student growth data (Alliance for Education, 2011). Currently student achievement is measured predominantly on test results from statewide assessment measures. When Act 54 is enacted, value-added student data will be used to measure not only school and district, but statewide performance scores. Actual student growth will be used, not just the collective achievement data of groups of students as is currently measured using AI. The value-added model will take into account the following variables when predicting student achievement: students' prior achievement on state assessments (ELA, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies), gifted status, section 504 status, free lunch status, reduced lunch status, student attendance, disability status, and discipline record. Limitations of the Louisiana value-added model are that it will only include those students with prior (at least three years of) achievement data,

those who have attended school for a full year, enrolled in grades 4-9, and if the teacher can confirm that they have taught the student for the entire school year (Noell, 2011).

According to the Alliance for Education (2011), there is compelling data from the research studies that show, "the efficacy of teachers and school leaders is the most important school-related factor affecting student performance" (p.3). As this study showed, change in AI over a two-year period only produced a small, significantly significant correlation to instructional leadership efficacy. If the value-added student model were intact at the time of this study, perhaps the results would show that a stronger relationship exists. Could principals' self-efficacy beliefs be a better predictor of value-added student growth in Louisiana? Examining the construct of principals' self efficacy within the context of Act 54 could broaden the knowledge in this promising, and emerging field of study.

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Appendix A

PERMISSION LETTER FROM AUTHOR

RE: PERMISSION REQUEST

Megan Tschannen-Moran [mxtsch@wm.edu]
Wednesday, June 01, 2011 4:09 AM

To: Jonathan Curtis Williams

Attachments: MTMGuest instructions.pdf (808 KB) [Open in Browser]

· You forwarded this message on 6/1/2011 9:21 AM.

Jonathan,

You have my permission to use the Principal Send of Efficacy scale that I developed with Dr. Gareis for your study. You can access the measure at my web site, at http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch. I have also attached directions you can follow to access my password protected web site, where you can download the two articles that I published with Dr. Gareis on the topic.

I would love to receive a brief summary of your results when you finish your study.

All the best,

Megan Tschannen-Moran

The College of William and Mary
School of Education
PO Box 8795
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795
Telephone: 757-221-2187
http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch

From: Jonathan Curtis Williams [mailto:jcwilliams@my.uno.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2011 7:23 AM
To: mxtsch@wm.edu
Subject: PERMISSION REQUEST

Greetings Dr. Tschannen-Moran :

My name is Jonathan Williams and I am a doctoral student at the University of New Orleans in the department of Educational Administration.

I am conducting a quantitative study that will examine, amongst other things, principals' sense of efficacy ratings. More specifically, my study is entitled, Examining The Relationship Between Louisiana Principals' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Student Achievement. As such, I would like to request your permission to reproduce and distribute the *Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale* that you developed with Dr. Gareis.

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Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

To: Principal

        1234 Anywhere St.

        Any city, Louisiana

From: Jonathan C. Williams, Doctoral Student

        University of New Orleans

        New Orleans, LA 70117

Greetings Principals,

I appreciate your support by taking time to answer the questions on this short, yet very important survey. The purpose of this survey is to help me collect research as part of my doctoral studies on the relationship between principal self-efficacy and student achievement. This survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Although this is not an anonymous survey, because you will be asked to provide your LA School Code, your responses will be kept confidential! Therefore, please feel free to answer all questions honestly.

Title of Research Study:	The Relationship Between Louisiana Principals' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Student Achievement
Research Director:	Dr. Brian Beabout Student Investigator: Jonathan Williams
Purpose of the Study:	This study will examine principals' self-efficacy in three domains: instructional leadership, management and moral leadership; in an effort to yield important relationships between Louisiana principals' self-efficacy and student achievement.

Procedures to be Used: Participants will be asked to respond to a few demographic questions and 18-item survey. The average completion time is less than 10 minutes.

Potential Risks to Subjects: Participants will be asked to supply their school code. Although supplying this code cannot guarantee anonymity, confidentiality of the results of the respondents will be maintained.

Potential Benefits of the Study: The results of this study may assist principal preparation programs, professional development opportunities for district leaders to pursue and will contribute to a growing body of research on principal self-efficacy.

Protection of the identity and privacy of subjects: All responses will be kept confidential and that confidentiality will be maintained in any future publications or presentations regarding this study.

By continuing on to complete this survey, you are acknowledging that you have read all of the above and have been fully informed of the above described study and the associated procedures, the possible benefits, and risks.

Thank you in advance for your support. I can be reached by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by email at jcwilliams@uno.edu.

_____ **Right to refuse:** Participation in this study is voluntary and participants may change their minds and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they may otherwise be entitled.

Sincerely,

Jonathan C. Williams

Appendix C

I.R.B. APPROVAL

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research University of New Orleans

_____

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Brian R. Beabout

Co-Investigator: Jonathan C. Williams

Date: August 25, 2011

Protocol Title: The Relationship Between Louisiana Principals' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Student Achievement

IRB#:   04Aug11

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

VITA

Jonathan Williams was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. He obtained his

Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Xavier University in 1992. He received

his Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of New Orleans in

2000.