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The Impact of NCLB on Inner City Elementary School Principals

Linda A. Amica

THE IMPACT OF NCLB ON INNER CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

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Barry University

by

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* * * * *

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Area of Specialization: Educational Leadership

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First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to my God who provided me emotional and physical strength to finish this work. I also dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful God sent husband, Melvin. Without his spiritual strength, infinite support and patience, I could not have completed this study. This dedication is also to my one year old son, Chandler Jordan. My love child has been a strong motivator. I thank my mother, who has conditioned me to believe that I can do anything and reminds me of this daily. I also thank my dad, who constantly brags to colleagues, friends, and family about how I have never quit anything I've started and how bright "his little girl is." For that, I could not bear to let him down. The motivation is invaluable. Their support and prayers have truly sustained me and have helped me realize this moment.

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF NCLB ON INNER CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Linda A. Amica

Barry University, 2007

Dissertation Chairperson: Teri D. Melton, Ed.D.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and its mandated accountability system has greatly impacted the role of principals. NCLB was authorized to address students in specific subgroups: limited English proficient students, migrants, minorities, and students with disabilities in an effort to ensure attainment of a defined level of proficiency. Inner city schools are characterized by a significant number of students from the targeted subgroups. Many school districts have currently created a nexus between principal evaluations and appraisals, student achievement, and the overall school performance. Consequently, inner city elementary school principals are threatened with the possibilities of low performance evaluations, career redirection, and loss of school level control.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the perceptions and experiences of principals who are assigned to inner city elementary schools. The researcher's goal was to describe the participants' views of accountability for administrators and their responsibilities for school improvement, student achievement, and the state's system of grading schools as outlined by NCLB.

Method

The phenomenological approach of qualitative inquiry was most appropriate for this study. The purposively selected criterion sample consisted of five principals assigned to inner city elementary schools. Data was collected via face-to-face interviews; data analysis was conducted by using the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method as described by Moustakas (1994).

Major Findings

The major findings of this study indicated that inner city elementary school principals feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to address social issues. Participants expressed that NCLB targets inner city schools and that inner city school principals are directly impacted prompting feelings of ineptness and inadequate treatment. NCLB mandates have brought extreme pressure, stress, and burnout due to accountability issues related to NCLB requirements and school grading.

Available training is believed to be generic and informal. Participants believed that performance appraisal instruments are generic with a subjective and political connotation. Participants expressed that the accountability impact of NCLB and school grading outweighs the indicators utilized to evaluate principals. They believe that inner city school principals have experiences that should be shared in order to provide recommendations for improving student achievement.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and my family. Their support, faith, and prayers helped me realize this moment.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction to the Study

Poverty, violence, crime, disciplinary problems, poor attendance, lack of support, high rates of adult literacy, widely diverse student populations, low graduation rates, a disproportionate number of students with disabilities, and over-crowding and often dilapidated facilities are all characteristics of inner city schools located in high poverty communities. Additionally, high teacher attrition, low test scores, and high administrative turnover are also associated with inner city schools. The federal free and reduced lunch program is the most comparable measure for identifying inner city high poverty schools. According to the United States Department of Education (2003), high poverty inner city schools are identified as having 75 percent or more students participating in the free and reduced lunch program.

Unequivocally, inner city school principals are faced with the same challenges as schools in other settings: suburban, rural, and schools with high and low socio-economic status (SES). The schools share the same concerns pertaining to standards, assessments, and accountability. However, inner city school principals must address these issues differently because the challenges are insurmountable. Inner city schools have a history of being troubled and many have withstood the pendulum of educational reform, all of which have promised to combat the myriad of issues that flood inner city schools and impede narrowing the achievement gap.

Inner city school principals face new and greater challenges, impoverished and disadvantaged students, prejudice, and legislation (Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000). Despite criticism from politicians, federal, state, and local educational policy makers, and their expressed discontentment and disappointment in narrowing the achievement gap, inner city school principals have been extremely diligent in their attempts to improve student achievement (King, 2002). Principals assigned to inner city schools are equally concerned with increasing academic achievement with an unyielding commitment to narrowing the achievement gap. Moreover, the interference of politics and corporate involvement has impinged greatly on the role of inner city school principals (Fowler, 2000).

Critics have interjected a strong influence by outlining school reform via the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The accountability of NCLB applies equally to principals in all settings: urban, suburban, and rural. Nonetheless, the implementation of NCLB and principals in the varied settings perform in disproportionate roles. Principals in inner city schools encounter the challenges and barriers that impact academic achievement and those challenges are innumerable and overwhelming. The accountability measures imposed by NCLB has proven to be a challenge for all principals; however, inner city school principals face greater challenges due to the number of issues surrounding inner city high poverty communities. Notably, issues that hinder student achievement in the inner city should not be attributed to the inner city school principal's lack of knowledge or incompetence.

This study aims to highlight inner city school principals' lived experiences in relation to accountability impact, as outlined by NCLB, with the intent of gaining a greater understanding of inner city elementary school principals' experiences and the meanings these experiences hold for them as individuals. Principals in low income and low achieving schools are responsible for ensuring the same student developmental gains and achievement as principals in medium to high SES and high performing schools. There are no exceptions for the known challenges identified in low achieving schools. Consequently, principals assigned to low-income and low achieving schools face different challenges than those of their colleagues assigned to other settings (Cuban, 2004).

Based on the definition of inner city schools provided herein, this study utilizes an intricate, two-fold definition made available by the Florida Department of Education. First, socioeconomic status (SES) is the primary factor when considering a family's ability to contribute to their child's development. Consequently, SES measures parents' education levels, occupations, and most importantly, incomes (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996). Socioeconomics is often the main focus in identifying inner city schools. The second point of clarification in identifying inner city schools holds consistent with the United States (U. S.) Department of Education's School Improvement Report (2001), which identifies inner city schools as having 75% or more minority students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

According to the Federal Register, as of June 30, 2004, the federal poverty guidelines indicated that a family of four is considered impoverished if there is an income of less than \$18,400 annually or \$1,534 monthly. For additional family members, add \$3,140 annually or \$262 monthly (<http://www.fns.usda.gov>). The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement suggested that inner city schools have a higher concentration of students from low income families (<http://www.firn.edu>, 2004). For this study, inner city schools are identified as high poverty schools located in a major urban setting with 75% or more students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

The principal's role has evolved since the introduction of the No Child Left Behind legislation. However, the role of the inner city school principal has become even more challenging. The demands of NCLB on inner city school principals have increased and the stakes are extremely high in terms of accountability. Specifically, "NCLB adds substantially to the principal's responsibility and accountability for student achievement, staff quality and legitimacy of the school's curriculum and instruction" (Educational Research Service, 2003, p. 2).

Background of the Problem

The many aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act directly impact principals' responsibilities and duties (Educational Research Service, 2003). For example, performance-based education accountability has become a reality in the form of a federal mandate. As such, in an attempt to guarantee that all children succeed, NCLB (also

referred to as Public Law 107-110) has produced several high-stakes accountability systems (Hess, Kelly, & Friedman, 2003). Accountability systems under NCLB are based on approaches that have been developed in states over the past 20 years (Matthews, 2004). In brief, under NCLB the accountability systems were designed to close the achievement gap between minorities and non-minorities and focus on the needs of students in specific subgroups, such as limited English proficient students, migrant students, minorities, and students with disabilities (Kysilka, 2003). States are required to define a level of performance proficiency, and schools are accountable for ensuring that 95% of the students in every subgroup reach this level (Matthews). Important components of NCLB are adequate yearly progress (AYP), high quality student assessments, and participation in various assessments by all students in all grades.

The Educational Research Service (2003) postulated that principals are charged with making sure that all instructional materials are research-based with heavy emphasis on instruction that is data-driven. As a result, school administrators are inundated with district, state, and federal mandates designed to make education equitable and ensure that the identified gaps in education are addressed. Of all the mandates and regulations mandated to date, the NCLB mandate significantly impacts principals in inner city schools.

The added pressure and expectations to improve individual school performance via high stakes testing and assessments have created enormous concerns for school principals, particularly those in inner city schools (Anthes, 2002). Greater accountability

causes school leaders to experience a great deal of anguish and distress due to unintended consequences (Jerald, 2003). To an inner city school principal, this could mean a low performance appraisal, career redirection, school sanctions, and/or reconstitution.

Elements of NCLB have added pressure on schools and district leaders. “They are under pressure to increase achievement across the board, narrow the test-score gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students and make sure all teachers are of high quality” (Anthes, 2002, p. 1).

Principals in schools that service a high percentage of low income students are faced with the toughest challenge of all. The majority of students negatively affected by the implementation of NCLB are from low-socio-economic areas and attending predominately minority schools (Kysilka, 2003). NCLB includes specific requirements and consequences for school improvement which add to the existing challenges already faced by inner city schools. There are no quantifiable indicators to measure the many challenges that hinder educational success for inner city schools. Anthes (2002) postulated that the major consequences spelled out in NCLB adversely impinge on the role of principals. Many of these consequences include decreased management authority at the school level, reconstitution of school staff, little or no input in curriculum implementation, and changes to the school’s administrative structure. The magnitude of the problem regarding inner city school principals and NCLB becomes amplified when federally mandated responsibilities and requirements dictate what must be accomplished and how it should be done. Moreover, accountability and responsibility have expanded

and are dramatically felt at the school level (Educational Research Service, 2003), specifically in the inner city school setting.

In terms of accountability for inner school principals, the greatest concern is making adequate yearly progress (AYP) as outlined by the state. AYP measures yearly progress toward achieving established academic standards (<http://nps.k12.va.us>, 2004). The effects of not making AYP from year-to-year ensure radical state and district interventions. These interventions and strategies could include the following: developing a comprehensive school improvement plan, implementing a school of choice program that allows parents to select a nearby school that has achieved AYP, providing supplemental educational services which may be selected by the parent, and even more severe reconstituting of staff and appointing outside experts to advise the school (Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Although all schools have challenges, there are specific additional barriers related to dealing with low achieving, low-income students, families, and communities. However, principals assigned to inner city schools are evaluated and compensated in the same manner as principals who are assigned to higher achieving schools. Unfortunately, educational leaders are responsible for academic achievement as well as addressing needs that may hinder academic success. Inner city school principals recognize that specific needs must be met before learning can transpire and there are specific tasks that they

must execute before they are able to fulfill their prescribed role as principal (Rooney, 2003).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (physiological, safety, love, self esteem, and self actualization) dominates the quest for academic achievement. As such, poverty has been identified as a powerful predictor of children's academic achievement. Children reared in poor families are usually of poor health, lack adequate nutrition, and often suffer from low self-esteem. They often have little or no ability to focus, are often subjected to violence, and suffer from low or no expectations set for them (Prince & Howard, 2002).

Accountability, as outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, has added greatly to the dilemma of setting priorities in education. Achievement and standards in low performing and low-income schools are often not the top priority for school administrators. Prince and Howard (2002) proposed that Maslow's theory is apparent when children of poverty enter school with the instinctive practice of focusing on survival and the attainment of basic needs. The researchers explained that physiological needs will dominate the need for school and education. They further indicated that administrators must understand the multidimensional obstacles presented by poverty in the fulfillment of basic needs before addressing educational needs. Consequently, in the inner city school there is a strong need to focus on addressing the hierarchical needs of children who are reared in poverty. High performing schools or schools in suburban communities tend to have fewer students who are being reared in poverty, and as such, these schools have less responsibility in the area of meeting basic needs. Conversely,

schools in the inner city have additional responsibilities as they face extreme consequences of poverty on academic success. Inner city school students and their families living in poverty are preoccupied with basic needs as indicated on Maslow's pyramid, making it impossible for them to focus on learning.

There are no current indicators of measurement or compensation for principals who must act upon the obstacles inherent in fulfilling the basic needs of inner city school students. It must be clear that inner city school principals can not shoulder the burden of ensuring that physiological needs (clothes, food, healthcare, safety, etc.) are addressed prior to successfully implementing educational programs intended to ensure that students meet the educational goals. NCLB requires states to set forth clear and concise performance standards for increased student achievement across a wide range of student subgroups (Matthews, 2004), all of whom are characteristic and dominate within the inner city school. Hence, principals assigned to inner city schools have a greater challenge for increased student performance than those schools with fewer subgroups to specifically target. NCLB has had the greatest impact on the role of the inner city school principal.

Significance of the Study

Since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, emphasis has been placed on school reform and accountability. The establishment of the accountability and assessment timeline incorporates sanctions and incentives which ultimately place greater demands on principals to produce and ensure results of improving student achievement as

outlined by each state and the federal government. There is an informal hierarchy of accountability with the greatest impact on school level administrators. Borba (2003) pointed out that accountability expectations are high and principals are on the frontline of implementing mandates and educational change.

Hess, Keller, and Friedman (2003) described the new federal accountability system as a coercive or suggestive system. Coercive accountability refers to sanctions or threats of termination for school principals. Conversely, suggestive accountability implies providing additional resources, professional development and assistance with improving student achievement.

Principals are held most accountable and they are most at risk for consequences attached to accountability systems primarily the utilization of coercive accountability. Consequences such as a low performance evaluation, demotion, reassignment or termination define the impact of NCLB on principals. The federal mandate requires states to establish guidelines for a level of performance proficiency, and schools are accountable for ensuring that 95% of the students in every subgroup reach this level (Matthews, 2004). The primary focus of NCLB is to address specific subgroups: economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and minority students (Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002). Ironically, principals assigned to inner city schools have a substantial number of students in each or all targeted subgroups.

Although all principals are impacted by NCLB mandates and accountability provisions, inner city school principals are faced with innumerable challenges. They are under tremendous pressure to ensure the attainment of higher tests scores and that the overall performance of the school is successful. Greater accountability causes school leaders to experience a great deal of anguish and distress due to unintended consequences (Jerald, 2003).

Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) shared a general list of challenges that urban school principals face. Their list includes homelessness, extreme poverty, single-family homes, inadequate childcare, drug and alcohol abuse, gang affiliation, new immigrants, and child abuse and neglect. Moreover, many students are not only being raised in single-family homes, but a growing number of students in urban schools are being raised by grandparents or great-grandparents. Absenteeism, disruptive behavior, high mobility, and a lack of parental/guardian involvement are added concerns of inner city school principals (Bowers, 2000).

This study provides insight into how NCLB has impacted the role of the inner city elementary school principal. It enabled inner city elementary school principals to share their experiences and challenges as they strive to meet the requirements of the mandate. Principals were afforded an opportunity to describe how they must react to the federal accountability system and avoid the consequences that will directly impact their career. After an extensive search, the researcher was unable to locate published peer-reviewed

literature that focused on NCLB and the impact on inner city school principals as it relates to school grading, performance evaluations, and principal preparedness.

This research provides significant data that relates to the perceptions of inner city elementary school principals concerning the challenges that hinder their ability to comply with state and federal mandates. The focus provides rich descriptions about the challenges as well as the consequences due to compliance or noncompliance and implementation of the current accountability system. The rich thick descriptions provide relevant information to lawmakers and educational leaders in effort to address the point of accountability. Findings of this study paint a vivid portrait of the impact and how inner city school principals make educational and non-educational decisions in an effort to improve student achievement and raise the school's grade.

The researcher found literature that speaks in isolation to NCLB, accountability, inner city schools and host of literature about inner city school principals. Additionally, there is literature that focuses on school grading. However, there is not a large body of research dedicated to understanding what inner city school principals endure during times of increased emphasis on high-stakes tests, school grading and whether their performance will provide the nexus for evaluating their effectiveness as a principal. This research intends to provide insight to federal and state policymakers and to contribute to future educational reform aimed at improving high-stakes accountability systems. It will further assist in the development of improving support to inner city school principals faced with numerous challenges that hinder student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and explore the perceptions and experiences of principals who are assigned to inner city elementary schools in one of the largest urban school districts in the nation. The emphasis will be placed on their perceptions and experiences of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act in relation to their roles as principals assigned to these schools. The researcher's goal was to describe the inner city school principals' views of accountability for administrators and their responsibilities for school improvement, student achievement, and the state's system of grading schools as outlined by the state and NCLB.

Research Questions

In order to explore and give a voice to inner city elementary school principals undertaking the task of meeting goals and attempting to avoid the potentially negative consequences of NCLB, this study was guided by the following questions:

- 1) What are the lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city schools who are faced with accountability provisions in accordance with the framework of educational governance of NCLB?
- 2) What types of challenges do inner city elementary school principals encounter as they attempt to fulfill the requirements of NCLB?
- 3) Do principals assigned to inner city schools perceive their preparedness for the principalship as adequate?

- 4) What perceived impacts have the accountability provisions had on connecting school performance to elementary principal's annual evaluation?

Overview of Philosophical Framework

This qualitative study is written from the social constructivist/hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Annells, 1996) explained that the constructivist approach is often used interchangeably with hermeneutics. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is rooted in the social constructivist belief system and is predicated on the assumption that "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and they develop subjective meanings of their experiences" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Crotty (as cited in Creswell) further added that each individual constructs meaning as they interact with the world and form their own interpretations. Principals assigned to work in inner city elementary schools share similar experiences. Therefore, all inner city elementary school principals, in this context, support a social exchange based on personal mental constructions surrounding their assignments to inner city school settings. Johnson (2000) proposed that principals' perceptions and opinions regarding the impact of risk factors contribute a legitimate source of information; they filter experience through individual, collective, and cognitive structures.

Several studies (Cuban, 2004; Danridge, Edwards, & Pleasants, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000) suggested that working with students and families from impoverished communities may affect a principal's ability to

ensure student achievement and meet the goals of NCLB. Therefore, additional studies must address the inner city school principals' perspectives concerning the challenges in meeting outlined goals. Studies are needed that describe principals' responses to the accountability and consequences of NCLB. Politicians, superintendents, federal, state, and local educational policymakers may benefit from such information and learn how to better assist schools and provide the appropriate resources needed to meet the goals of NCLB. Everyone can learn and become aware of the needs of principals assigned to inner city elementary schools by hearing their perspectives about working with inner city students and families. Therefore, it is imperative to give a voice to inner city elementary school principals trying to meet the goals and avoid the potentially negative consequences of NCLB while dealing with the challenges of the inner city. The framework of hermeneutics/constructivist-interpretive approach will be used to explain the lived experience of principals assigned to work in the inner city elementary school setting.

Overview of the Methodology

Initially, the researcher sought to examine perceptions of leadership effectiveness and to explore how inner city school principals rate their leadership effectiveness in comparison to principals assigned to other settings: suburban, rural, and schools with high and low socio-economic status (SES). A review of the current literature reveals that there are numerous instruments, questionnaires, and theories formulated about the inner city school principal. A comparison of leadership effectiveness and perceptions of

principals in different settings described in other studies proved adequate. There is a plethora of quantitative studies. These studies suggest that there is adequate information pertaining to the topic of inner city school principals and their role. Conversely, there is essentially a lack of qualitative studies exploring the phenomenon of being a principal assigned to an inner city elementary school implementing mandates outlined in NCLB.

There is an apparent lack of qualitative studies exploring the phenomenon of being a principal of an inner city elementary school. A qualitative study is practical because it allows the researcher to preserve the rich descriptions provided by participants. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to obtain information and rich data regarding real-life experiences pertaining to the phenomenon. Through open-ended interviews, participants are given an opportunity to describe the phenomenon in their own words, capturing personal perspectives (Patton, 1990). According to Creswell (2002), qualitative methodology is utilized to examine a research problem in which the researcher explores and seeks understanding of a central phenomenon. Creswell further explained that exploration is necessary when little is known in the literature about the phenomenon and the researcher will learn more from participants. The approach of research best able to explore this phenomenon is qualitative research. This study sought to explore and describe the experience of inner city school principals as it relates to accountability and the implementation of NCLB mandates by including qualitative methodology and phenomenological data collection.

The aim of phenomenology is to illuminate meanings that emerge from lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The research process addresses questions that are rooted in social meaning. It should have both social meaning and personal significance (Moustakas, 1994). According to Annells (1996), the inquiry process for hermeneutic phenomenology can be described as, “the aim is to identify and provide an understanding of the variety of constructions that exist about a phenomenon and to bring them into consensus” (p. 708). A comprehensive review of the literature provided the nexus for facilitating the development of appropriate and guiding questions for the interview protocol.

The phenomenological approach of qualitative research explores meaning of experiences for those who have had the experience and have the ability to provide dense descriptions of it (Moustakas, 1994). This research places emphasis on the phenomenon experienced by principals who have been assigned to inner city elementary schools; consequently, a phenomenological tradition of inquiry is best suited for this study. Creswell (2003) explained that phenomenology describes the lived experiences for several individuals about a specific concept or phenomenon; therefore, this study is best presented via the social constructivist paradigm.

Creswell (2003) proposed that interviews should consist of a small number of semi-structured open-ended questions. In-depth interviews illuminate and provide full essence and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In order to analyze the data, Creswell recommended utilizing Moustakas’ (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen

Method of Analysis. Findings from data analysis include illustrations and examples of horizontalization, meaning of units, and themes. Moreover, the data were organized and analyzed in order to facilitate the development of rich textural descriptions. Throughout the process, the researcher utilized the process of epoche in which all biases and preconceived ideas about things must be set aside (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness and transferability were guaranteed by soliciting the advice of peers to review the research process. Most importantly, through each step of the process, the researcher asked participants to review researcher interpretations and check for accuracy. Because the researcher is currently a principal in an inner city school, it was important to share all past experiences, biases, and prejudices (Creswell, 1998).

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms and definitions are provided to clarify terminology used throughout this study.

Accountability System. As outlined in NCLB, by the 2013-2014 school year all states must have a statewide system which emphasizes set academic standards to address student achievement proficiency for all students. Student achievement is to be measured each year for every child. All school districts in each state must publish a local report card (LRC) prior to the beginning of each new school year. The annual LRC must contain the previous year's results as they relate to the state accountability plan (<http://www.nps.k12.va.us>, 2004).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Established by each state, AYP measures yearly progress toward achieving established academic standards (<http://www.nps.k12.va.us>, 2004).

The salient goals of establishing guidelines for meeting AYP are to (1) narrow the achievement gap by reducing the percentage of students scoring at the lowest performance levels, (2) make relative growth, and (3) meet an absolute target. There are specific indicators for which schools are held accountable, such as:

1. NCLB requires each state to focus on specific groups of students; students are identified by subgroups: race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, limited English proficient, and economically disadvantaged (absolute target and narrow the achievement gap).
2. Student developmental learning gains and test scores (relative growth).
3. Number of students participating in assessments.
4. Increase in the graduation rate (Educational Research Service for the National Association of Elementary School Principals & The National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2003).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). ESEA is the principle federal law affecting K-12 education in the United States. As a result of the Civil Rights movement, the 1965 enactment was formed to address specific needs of high poverty schools. President Lyndon B. Johnson endorsed Title I of the ESEA by providing funding to support remedial programs. The goal was aimed at equality of educational opportunity.

Emphasis was placed on addressing the educational needs of “educationally disadvantaged” students (Fritzberg, 2004).

Inner City Schools. For purpose of this study, inner city schools will be defined as those schools characterized as being geographically located in high poverty communities and have been identified as having 75% or more of their students participating in the free and reduced lunch program (Federal Register, 2003).

Low Achieving Schools. Schools identified as not making adequate yearly progress or meeting established state standards for all subgroups are classified as low achieving schools. The four major subgroups identified by NCLB are: economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and minority students (Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. NCLB challenges schools to raise expectations by establishing state academic standards in reading and mathematics within a twelve-year period. NCLB requires all states to establish a state testing system that meets federal guidelines and ensures that students meet or exceed established state standards (Kysilka, 2003).

Reconstitution. Reconstitution may occur when a school fails to make AYP as defined by state guidelines. The establishment of a universal definition for reconstitution currently does not exist and varies according to implementation (Rudo, 2001). The following exemplify definitions:

1. Reconstitution can be defined as the restructuring of schools which may include replacement of the superintendent, principal or other administrators. Reconstitution may include losing control of schools and/or districts to State Departments of Education (Rudo, 2001).
2. Disbanding a school's staff and reopening the building with a new faculty, structure and, curriculum (<http://www.nea.org>, 1999).
3. NCLB mandates sanctions for low performing schools (schools that fail to ensure that student performance is above or at the levels established by the state for measuring adequate yearly progress). Reconstitution is the restructuring of school leadership. It requires establishing a new philosophy, making painstaking staffing changes and the revamping of a schools curriculum and instructional practices (Rudo).
4. To evaluate a school's instructional staff and replace them if necessary (Jerald, 2003).

State School Grading Plan. Schools are assigned a performance grade based on specific measures. A letter of grade of A, B, C, D, or F is assigned and released for public notification. Schools are assigned a performance grade based on student achievement data and learning gains toward specific achievement objectives and standards from state assessment test (<http://www.myflorida.edu>, 2005).

Title I Schools. Title I was established as a result of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which addresses the specific needs of high

poverty schools. The intent of Title I is to provide additional federal resources for schools in an effort to assist students who are academically at risk. Funding can be used for services such as tutoring, improved technology, reduction of class size, professional development activities, early intervention programs, and supplies and materials. Title I funds are used to supplement and not supplant the needs of the school. Schools may qualify for Title I if 40% or more students in the school receive free or reduced lunch (<http://www.firn.edu>, 2004).

Limitations

Limitations of the study are primarily due to the sample size of five principals assigned to inner city elementary schools. A small sample may be considered a limitation to generalizability. Findings may not be generalizable to elementary schools in other settings, other school districts, or secondary school principals. In an effort to identify potential inner city elementary school principals, the researcher reviewed specific data: free and reduced lunch school percentages, school grading reports, and principals' tenure. Although the small sample may be considered a limitation to generalizability, findings may be transferable to other settings. Due to the utilization of textually rich description, readers and other researchers will have a level of transferability as it pertains to the research. Most importantly, the researcher is currently a principal assigned to one of the districts inner city schools; therefore, researcher bias may be perceived as a limitation.

Delimitations

This study was conducted by interviewing selected inner city elementary school principals who are involved in the implementation of the NCLB. All inner city elementary school principals were not interviewed; instead, a criterion sampling of five elementary school principals working in schools with a letter of C, D, or F, as designated by standards from state assessment test were selected. The delimiting criteria consisted of principals assigned for a minimum of three to five years to inner city elementary schools with 90 % or more of its students living in poverty as outlined by the federal free and reduced lunch program guidelines. The study was limited to one urban school district geographically located in the southeastern part of the United States. By delimiting the sample, it is not possible to generalize the results as they relate to all inner city school principals responsible for NCLB mandates.

Chapter Summary

Performance-based accountability systems as mandated by NCLB and factors associated with inner city schools, such as crime, poverty, lack of parental involvement, adult illiteracy, teacher attrition, and dilapidated buildings defined the problem area related to the study. Under NCLB, performance-based education accountability is inescapable. Accountability systems aim to narrow the achievement gap between minorities and non-minorities with emphasis on students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and migrants (Kysilka, 2003). According to NCLB, the onus is on all states to define a level of performance proficiency and ensure that 95% of the students in

every sub-group reach this level (Matthews, 2004). Furthermore, states must continuously establish and make adequate yearly progress (AYP), administer high quality assessments, and establish a percentage and make certain that the minimum percentage of students participate in state testing.

Accountability systems under NCLB have created a domino effect for school districts and school level administrators. Studies (Educational Research Service, 2003; Matthews, 2004) suggested that NCLB impacts principals' responsibilities, duties, and performance primarily because of the pressure and penalties that each state faces for failure to comply with the mandates of NCLB. Non-compliance with NCLB could mean poor performance appraisals, demotions, alternate assignments or terminations for principals (Jerald, 2003). Furthermore, Anthes (2002) explained that school penalties include sanctions and reconstitution.

The purpose of the study was to give a voice to elementary school principals' as they describe their perceptions and experiences of the impact of NCLB as it pertains to their current assignment in an inner city school. The researcher utilized qualitative methods to obtain participants views of accountability for inner city school principals at the elementary level. The theory of social constructivist/hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used to describe the lived experiences of elementary school principals assigned to inner city school who are faced with fulfilling mandates outlined in NCLB.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter II is a review of the research literature as it relates to the lived experiences of inner city school principals, the impact of the No Child left Behind Act of 2001, accountability and responsibilities of principals, and the performance appraisal process for school administrators. Moreover, emphasis is placed on the role of the school principal and on inner city school principals. The review examines qualitative and quantitative studies that described the purposes and history of politics in education and The No Child Left Behind Act, as well as perceptions about the principal's role. The analysis covers the timeline and historical movement of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which resulted in the fundamental evolution for inner city school principals and their role as school leaders. The literature is shaped by examining performance appraisal systems utilized to evaluate and determine the effectiveness of school principals.

Theoretical Framework

According to Creswell (2003), the placement of theory affects a qualitative study. For example, the theory occurs in the opening passages of studies with a cultural or theoretical theme. On a continuum, Creswell (1998) placed phenomenology at the "before" end. This study examines the meaning of experiences for principals assigned to inner city elementary schools and the effects of their role as principal since the enactment

of NCLB. In order to ensure a strong orienting framework of a study, it is suggested that the researcher place theory at the beginning of the study. Placing the theory at the beginning provides information into what and how a study will unfold (Creswell, 1998). The focus for this study utilizes a phenomenological approach as outlined by Moustakas (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (1998), and Creswell (1998, 2003).

The theoretical stance in which to view and understand principals assigned to inner city schools dealing with the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act must be presented in a way that emphasizes and provides a deeper understanding of the phenomena. Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) and self-efficacy provides this critical framework. SLT enables the researcher to ensure an understanding of the implications for inner city elementary school principals. SLT emphasizes the importance of observation, modeling behaviors, attitudes, and the reactions of others (Bandura, 1977). It encompasses many theories and approaches; for this study, the researcher will place emphasis on self-efficacy. Bandura's research on self-efficacy revealed that individuals often believe that their own abilities guide their actions by focusing on what they are trying to achieve and how much effort they put into their performance (Grusec, 1992).

The mandates of NCLB and related concerns working in the inner city tend to challenge the self-worth and self-efficacy of the inner city elementary school principal. Grusec (1992) indicated that self-efficacy has guided research in several areas including academic and personal achievement. According to Bandura (1977), "expectations of

personal self-efficacy determine whether coping behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences” (p. 191). Inner city school principals may feel extreme pressure while working to ensure student achievement and meeting the mandates outlined in NCLB. This pressure could positively impact how they perceive their abilities to succeed despite known obstacles which hinder student achievement for their students.

According to Bandura (1977), outcome expectancy suggested that individuals with high expectancy believe that certain behaviors will guarantee specific outcomes. Most importantly, if the expected outcomes are highly esteemed, the greater the motivation will be to achieve them. Efficacy expectations ensure confidence in one’s self that a specific behavior will guarantee desired outcomes. Bandura explained that the stronger one’s convictions are regarding personal effectiveness, the greater the impact will be when coping with difficult situations. With the appropriate training and preparedness, individuals are given the opportunity to increase their ability to cope with challenging situations. Self-efficacy refers to how an individual learns to master a challenging task or manage a difficult situation. Self-efficacy outcomes and expectations derive from four major sources: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

Individuals may master the most difficult obstacles by persistent attempts (Bandura, 1977). Performance accomplishment may be defined as successfully completing a set of task or having a successful personal experience. Importantly, upon

productively completing a difficult task, one may desire other challenges. Personal success provides a strong sense of efficacy and willingness to pursue greater challenges.

Vicarious experience is the second source of self-efficacy. Vicarious experience is another way of explaining how one masters difficult challenges. This is done by observing and modeling the behaviors of others who may have successfully performed a difficult task. The belief is that if others can achieve the obstacle at hand, then they can master the same task. Modeling or observing enables one to put themselves in the place of the role model (Bandura, 1977). Notably, inner city school principals can utilize this source of self-efficacy effectively by modeling other successful inner city school principals. This provides a stronger sense of self-efficacy.

The third source of self-efficacy is verbal persuasion. This refers to persuasion or control over an individual's behaviors in order to establish self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Persuaders must focus positive persuasion with emphasis on building self confidence. They should remain positive and focus on the individual's sense of self efficacy. This can be achieved if the persuader fully understands the individual's negative performance(s) and preparedness to accomplish a specific task.

The fourth and final source of self-efficacy is emotional arousal or physiological arousal. In an effort to determine one's ability to accomplish a challenging task, Bandura (1977) states that individuals rely primarily on their emotional state. For example, stressful and exhausting situations may be misconstrued as an inability to perform. One may measure their level of confidence according to their physiological state

(Bandura, 1977). Feelings of anger, fear, or other moods may impact one's judgment of personal self-efficacy. Negative moods may exacerbate personal self-efficacy.

Conversely, positive moods may boost perceived self-efficacy. If inner city school principals are placed in arduous situations, their performance will be negatively impacted. Individuals must be cognizant of any negative emotional state that may hinder their ability to perform specific tasks and avoid questioning of personal competence.

The Social Learning Theory is applicable and relevant to inner city school principals responsible for implementing NCLB mandates because of its focus on self-efficacy. The study emphasizes challenges, performance, and the ability of principals to execute outlined federal mandates. A comprehensive understanding of SLT and the four sources of self-efficacy provides the theoretical framework for researching the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on inner city elementary school principals.

History of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

A Nation At Risk

In April 1983, the United States Department of Education's National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation At Risk*. This distressing federal study concluded that "education in the United States suffers from lack of rigor and allows insufficient time for children to learn adequately. Teachers were found to be poorly prepared and underpaid" (Edwards & Allred, 1993, p. 85). The report referred to the performance of public education as mediocre; therefore, establishing a sense of urgency for educational reform similar to the concerns which surfaced during the launching of

Sputnik in 1957. Prior to the publishing of *A Nation At Risk*, there had been innumerable attempts to reform public education for various reasons. “This aspiration to reform schools has been a recurrent theme in American education. American schools have been subjected to numerous reform efforts” (Eisner, 1992, p. 610).

The Commission made recommendations that prompted dramatic changes in educational reform. The 18 members of the Commission of Excellence produced a 36-page document that suggested educational changes relating to standards, content, teaching methods, and expectations (Goldberg, 1984). The Commission recommended higher and measurable standards for academic achievement and the establishment of five new basic core areas: Language arts/reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and technology (Northern Central Regional Education Laboratory, 2004).

Notably, the final recommendation of the Commission placed emphasis on school leadership and the importance of ensuring that the reforms are executed (Goldberg, 1984). When referencing *A Nation At Risk* report, it is viewed as a criticism of public education in American. Goldberg summarized the intentions of the National Commission of Excellence document and stated that, “education is important and schools were tilting toward mediocrity and America should have the best” (p.15).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), or Public Law 107-110, is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Goodwin, Arens, Barley, and Williams (2002) found that the mandate passed by an

overwhelming margin in both houses of Congress in December 2001. Prior to passing NCLB, there were many debates and discussions due to the perplexity of this reform. Following months of debates in Congress, President George W. Bush signed the act into law on January 8, 2002. According to Kysilka (2003), senate debates and expressions from the education community were indicative of the concerns regarding the impact it would have on what was taught in schools.

Existent literature suggested that the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act places strong emphasis on accountability and who should be held responsible. All stakeholders of education would agree that there must be some level of accountability in education. There has always been an informal hierarchy of accountability. However, NCLB places emphasis on a formal hierarchial accountability system. Parents hold schools accountable for their children's education. Teachers hold each other responsible, predecessors and/or successors (from grade to grade and from subject to subject). Districts refer to school level leadership, state officials challenge individual school districts, and states are held accountable for performance at the federal level.

Hess, Kelly, and Friedman (2003) referred to the federal accountability mandate as "performance-based education" (p. 22). They further asserted that performance-based accountability can be viewed as coercive accountability or suggestive accountability. Hess, Kelly, and Friedman defined coercive accountability as "mean" accountability. A coercive accountability system refers to incentives and sanctions such as threats of firing principals for failure to improve academics. Coercive accountability places strong

demands and pressure on school leaders in an effort to guarantee that there is fidelity to academics and commitment to improving student achievement. Suggestive “nice” accountability provides additional resources, professional development, and assistance in order to improve academics. Proponents of suggestive accountability believe that school leaders would benefit from assistance such as the support of experts and educational specialists to assist with using test data as a diagnostic device or assistance with improving school wide and classroom programs (Hess, Kelly, & Friedman). Whether suggestive or coercive, accountability systems are intended to provide a way to guarantee that students are better prepared and that no one, primarily disadvantaged students, slips through the cracks.

Accountability addresses the need for assistance in low performing schools. Hess, Kelly, and Friedman’s (2003) explanation of coercive and suggestive accountability clearly depicts The No Child Left Behind Act. The mandate seeks to ensure that a high quality education is equitable and attainable for all students. Under the act, states must establish academic standards and state academic assessments (Goodwin, Arens, Barley, & Williams, 2002). According to Spoehr (2004), by 1990 most states had established mandatory testing programs complete with a built-in accountability systems. However, there was no connection to school closures, funding, or threats of principals losing their jobs. The establishment of the accountability and assessment timeline incorporates sanctions and incentives which ultimately place greater demands on school leaders to produce and perform. Many sections of the NCLB require implementation at the school

level. All principals face many issues as they try to execute district, state, and federal policies and regulations resulting from the mandate. Spoehr (2004) explained that school principals are at the center of this storm of activity.

Policies, Politics, and School Reform

Literature examining implications of the No Child Left Behind Act provided a comprehensive understanding of the effects and impacts it has had on the role of school principals. The NCLB legislation mandated comprehensive education reform. It is evidence of the federal government's strong involvement in setting public school policy. The specific guidelines therein clearly impact how school leaders are to proceed in their roles. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP) collaborated with the Educational Research Service (ERS) and produced the *K-12 Principals Guide To No Child Left Behind* (2003). In this joint publication, the NAESP, NAASP and ERS (2003) expressed that school leaders are faced with major challenges in implementing NCLB. They further contended that the challenge is for school leaders to develop a clear understanding and adherence to all the complex requirements of NCLB.

Local, state, and federal mandates are generally passed down to school leaders for implementation. Federal, state and local expectations are so numerous, demanding, and complex that many principals become frustrated as to how to execute the many mandates that exist. Expectations are high and principals are on the frontline of implementing mandates and educational change (Borba, 2003). In a study conducted by Johnson

(2004), more than eight out of ten principals found it difficult to interpret and comply with local, state, and federal mandates. Understanding NCLB is important because of the expectations set forth for principals. The mandates directly impact the role of the school principal as most of the provisions under the act must be carried out by school leaders. According to Borba (2003), retention policies, graduation requirements, and mandated summer and tutorial programs are challenges that principals face in implementing and ensuring reform. Moreover, mandates without funding bring about great challenges. Principals are expected to adhere to policy mandates without consideration for the necessary funding and these mandates can usually be translated into money problems. Johnson (2004) surveyed several school administrators and determined that 88% of the principals felt that they have experienced an increase in responsibilities due to mandates. The principals added that the increase in responsibilities usually does not include additional funding or resources (Johnson).

Further review of the literature places emphasis on political agendas that affect the role of school principals. Viteritti (2003) presented a critical analysis on school reform and the political system's involvement in producing policy changes that were designed to address the needs of inner city schools. As it relates to school reform literature in political science, Stone and Henig (as cited in Viteritti) described public education and the many stakeholders as a "cartel incapable of reforming itself" (p. 40). The project sought to describe those stakeholders with major influence and their agendas that would lead to major reform. Findings revealed that business leaders play a major and

historic role in the politics of urban education reform. In terms of major influence, Stone and Henig further described parental involvement as “negligible” (p. 40). Viteritti concluded that in order to achieve sustainability of school reform and school improvement, educational leaders must be a part of reform.

According to Hoffman (2000), politicians use their positions to enact reform movement and, therefore, the actions of educators are controlled by the power of political principles. Hoffman postulated that there are many policy mandates in place to control the actions and decisions made by school leaders. He further added that as mandates are added, the school principal’s authority diminishes. According to Rooney (2003), principals serve as mediators for politicians, business leaders, and the news media. Rooney added that since the publication of *A Nation At Risk*, in order to gain voter support, politicians have made educational issues a "well-publicized priority" (p. 77). The author further elaborated that politicians need the public to believe that public education has extensive flaws, that public education needs improvement, and that the only solution is political interference (Rooney).

Hoffman (2000) explained that transforming schools requires a societal transformation. All stakeholders including parents must be held accountable for academic success. Most principals, particularly those assigned to inner city or low performing schools, accept and welcome the reform of higher standards. Principals are able to decipher political demands and accept responsibility for learning and the context in which it occurs (Rooney, 2003). School level administrators are more than willing to take part in

school reform and provide input into the policy making process, because as policies are made, principals are expected to be change agents. Instead, with NCLB principals are simply expected to follow, implement, and influence policy (Fowler, 2000). While, local, state and national policy makers rely on principals to adhere to policy amendments, most policies and mandates are established without reference to resources and implications needed for implementation.

Political Culture in the United States and Involvement in Education

Political culture factors shape government and educational policies. Mead (2004) defined culture as “widespread attitudes that shape how public institutions actually operate, against their reforms. Culture teaches leaders and citizens in a state the way things are in politics, and how they ought to be” (p. 274). An understanding of the political culture is essential if school leaders want to approach educational reform effectively. Fowler (2000) found that the political effect on school leadership is more prevalent in different regions of the United States. According to Elazar (as cited in Fowler), there are three predominant political cultures in the United States: traditionalistic, moralistic, and individualistic (see Table 2.1). Of the three, Fowler warned that those principals who are part of the traditionalistic culture face a greater challenge. Effective school administrators must be cognizant of the political culture within which they work (Fowler).

Table 2.1

Political Cultures, Characteristics, and States

Political Cultures	Characteristics	States
Traditionalistic	Mainly in southern states (formerly racial caste system), Political participation for local elite. Restricts political activity to maintaining status quo and defending traditional values.	Alabama Arizona Arkansas Florida Georgia Kentucky Louisiana Mississippi New Mexico North Carolina Oklahoma South Carolina Tennessee Texas Virginia West Virginia
Political Cultures	Characteristics	States
Moralistic	Origins of New England and in areas where Scandinavian immigrants are dominant. Political participation is primarily those interested in being public servants and political activities. Emphasis is on the common good.	California Colorado Idaho Iowa Kansas Maine Michigan Minnesota Montana New Hampshire North Dakota Oregon South Dakota Utah Vermont Washington

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Political Cultures	Characteristics	States
Individualistic	Predominantly the middle Atlantic states where politics is viewed as a business and government involvement in church, family, and business issues should be minimal. Emphasis is on serving specific interests.	Alaska Connecticut Delaware Hawaii Illinois Indiana Maryland Massachusetts Missouri Nebraska Nevada New Jersey New York Ohio Pennsylvania Rhode Island Wyoming

Elazar (as cited in Fowler, 2000, p. 94)

The traditionalistic political culture holds the belief that those who are viewed as the “established elitist” are the only individuals who can only hold political leadership (Fowler, 2000). The traditionalists are dominant in states of Southern origin such as Florida, Texas, Georgia, West Virginia, and Oklahoma. Traditionalistic states are primarily interested in upholding traditional values (Mead, 2004). School leaders in southern states, such as Florida, must contend with the fact that the traditionalistic culture has less-developed bureaucratic systems and more groups of elitists. Mead described the traditionalistic culture as having low or minimal political participation, fewer competitive parties, and insular and conservative programming. Moreover, Elazar (as cited in Mead) stressed that the traditionalistic political culture is concerned primarily with defending traditional values. The literature suggested that principals in traditionalistic states will experience reform in areas such as student testing, student discipline, and a reduction in the authority of school administrators, all of which are consistent with the traditionalistic focus on maintaining elite power and ensuring status quo (Fowler).

The moralistic political culture is rooted in the belief that government and politics exists to make society better as a whole. California, Colorado, Minnesota, Utah, and New Hampshire are some of the states identified as functioning as moralistic political cultures. Like the traditionalistic political culture, the moralistic political culture struggles for power. However, the moralistic political culture proposes that everything must benefit the greatest number (Mead, 2004). Elazar (as cited in Mead) described the moralistic political culture as favoring and protecting the interest of the public. Mead indicated that

moralistic states have high political participation and well-developed bureaucracies. Principals who are leading in a moralistic setting must be actively involved and expect others to be involved in school politics as well as other political issues (Fowler, 2000).

The individualistic setting is instituted in states such as Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio. The individualistic political culture operates on the premise that the government should not have influence in the areas of business, family, or the church (Fowler, 2000). There is a narrow and specific interest in the individualistic political culture. The government tends to serve more specific interests (Mead, 2004). Fowler suggested that school leaders operating in an individualistic setting should avoid politics and refrain from expressing political views. Principals in this setting have greater influence over the educational process and should ensure educational success in order to avoid inviting politics into the environment. Fowler suggested that in order for principals to be effective and successful in their roles, they must work with the system rather than against it. School leaders must understand the political culture within which they work.

Reeves (2004) postulated that it is a grand presumption that principals enjoy enormous power and that this grand presumption of power is really an “authority/responsibility disequilibrium” (p. 55). A compelling example of authority/responsibility disequilibrium is, “When education leaders are held responsible for the actions of others-ranging from the most recalcitrant employee to the most apathetic community member even though they lack the authority to control the actions

of either of these stakeholders” (p. 55). Understanding the political culture will give school administrators substantial power in executing their roles.

The United States has an intricate political, system and education and politics are intertwined; therefore, principals must make every attempt to work with the political culture in which they live as opposed to working against it (Fowler, 2000). In order to be effective, principals should understand how political culture impacts them as school leaders. Principals working in a traditionalistic political culture are accepted by local elitist. Their acceptance is due to their ability maintain status quo and become a part of the established order. According to Elazar (as cited in Mead, 2004), principals in this setting are successful if they maintain the support of the group. Principals working in a moralistic setting are expected to be involved in government as well as school politics. Their success is based on their level of involvement in ensuring what is best for the common good and offering as much support as possible. Conversely, effective principals working in an individualistic political culture understand that people in this culture take a pragmatic stance. They are aware of the need to understand the political structure as well as the political culture in which they work (Mead, 2004).

The Role of the Principal

Defining the role of the principal can be difficult considering the various hats that he/she is required to wear within a single day's time. Since the release of *A Nation At Risk*, most school level administrators would agree that the principalship has expanded and evolved tremendously throughout the last 20 years. The principalship is defined in metaphorical terms by comparing principals to firefighters. "They spend their days like firefighters in a summer forest putting out one configuration only to see several others break out in new and unforeseen spots" (Rooney, 2003, p. 77).

Regardless of whether the school is urban, suburban, or rural and no matter how different schools are, the principalship is an overwhelming and challenging job. The level of accountability has increased greatly, and arriving and leaving before anyone else is typical on most days for any principal (Rooney, 2003).

The literature also revealed that the principal's role may be totally different according to the school setting. King (2002) discovered that when school leaders are utilizing data to address student achievement, principals in low performing schools used the data to analyze and identify areas of weakness in order to establish a basis for improving classroom instructions. In high performing schools, however, principals used data analysis for the purpose of simply focusing on students in the lowest percentile and encouraging teachers to set high expectations for their students. King also found that principals assigned to high performing schools place emphasis on ensuring that students

make adequate progress as opposed to principals in low performing schools whose primary goal is to focus on the entire curriculum and improving test scores school-wide.

Schiff (2002) utilized a survey conducted by the Milken Family Foundation (MFF) in 2000 to examine the role of the principal. The MFF survey revealed invaluable information regarding the role of the principal. The results identified the seven most important roles of the principal (with one being the most important): (1) Establishing a learning climate; (2) Personnel issues; (3) Curriculum concerns; (4) Managing day-to-day operations; (5) Student services; (6) Strategic planning; and, (7) Community relations. Schiff further established that the work week for principals consists on average of 62 hours, which may be due to the excessive amount of responsibility tied to the job in the form of personnel issues, instructional leadership, and dealing with parent concerns. Other responsibilities included: student discipline; community issues and basic school management, such as payroll; building maintenance; and, property inventory. The results provided a clear understanding of what principals do and what they experience (Schiff).

The constant restructuring of public education serves as the primary origin for the changing role of the principalship. Over the past ten years, the principals' role has transformed into a position of more responsibility and less authority (Mcinerney, 2003). There is instinctively a nexus between school change, reform, and the changing role of the principal. In fact, job-related demands and expectations have redefined and recreated the role. Matthews and Crow (2003) warned that principals need to be aware that change cannot be a one-time event. Consequently, researchers have defined the role by utilizing

numerous terms. Matthews and Crow (2003) identified seven role conceptions of principals: learner, mentor, supervisor, manager, leader, politician, and advocate. According to the researchers, role conception number one refers to the principal as learner. The principal becomes a learner when the role changes from instructional leader to lead learner. DuFour (2002) postulated that the principal as learner places emphasis on building a professional learning community by focusing on staff as well as student learning. Matthews and Crow indicated that principals must be learners, and most importantly, they need to facilitate the learning of others. They further revealed that principals are learners when they actively reflect and inquire.

The second role conception relates to the principal as mentor. Principals are responsible for implementing mentorship programs for new teachers and teachers who show performance deficits (Matthew & Crow, 2003). Many state and local mandates require principals to serve as mentors or coaches to teachers; however, it is difficult to envision the principal as a mentor because s/he is normally viewed by teachers as a student manager (Matthews & Crow). Matthews and Crow further indicated that the role of the principal as mentor is extremely complex because, in the past, it has been uncommon for principals to directly mentor teachers. Rather, principals need to organize mentorship programs and delegate the responsibility to others. The principal as mentor is a role of “supporting and developing” (p. 80) and requires a more direct and extensive involvement from the principal. It may be difficult for teachers to accept the principal as a personal mentor. Matthews and Crow disclosed that teachers prefer having a colleague

teacher serve as mentor. They further revealed that teachers are not comfortable having the principal serve as mentor.

The third role conception identifies the principal as supervisor, a term that has always been equated with the role of the principal. It is imperative for principals to perform as supervisor under specific circumstances. Matthews and Crow (2003) charted the historical perspective of the principal as supervisor and found many changes in the role. The researchers found traditional perceptions, such as authoritarian, overseer, implementer and regimenter, progress monitor, and facilitator. Today, however, the supervisor role is defined as one who coaches and assumes responsibility for creating a learning organization.

Matthews and Crow (2003) identified principal as manager and principal as leader as the fourth and fifth conceptualized role for the principalship. Although refuted in the past, the balance of leadership and management requires principals to be task-oriented as well as goal-oriented. Matthews and Crow emphasized the leadership role for principals in the 21st century; however, leadership versus management continually plagues school administrators. Daily managerial routines, such as payroll and property inventory, often characterize principals as managers.

The sixth conceptualized role of the principalship refers to the principal as a politician. Matthews and Crow (2003) utilized terminology such as buffering, micropolitics, power, bargaining, and boundaries when referring to principals as politicians. Society, the community, the district, and the school are levels of politics in

which principals play roles. Their political role requires such skills as negotiating, compromising, and diplomacy, all of which encourage constructive communication when responding to discord (Matthews & Crow).

The political role is one of power and is deeply rooted in advocacy. While the political role is important for community and school relations, the advocacy role is of equal importance. The seventh and final role of conception identified by Matthews and Crow (2003) suggested that the principal must serve as an advocate. Advocacy requires understanding and defending the rights of the subgroups that make up the school and community. The advocacy role entails knowing and representing racial, ethnic, economic, and culturally diverse groups, as well as students with special needs (Matthews & Crow). Inner city schools tend to have a high percentage of students eligible and classified in the various subgroups. The more students identified within a subgroup, the greater the challenges are for school principals.

Additional literature provided overlapping insight into the role of the principalship. Principals are expected to fulfill their roles as school leaders by means of accountability systems from federal, state, and district regulations. According to Spoehr (2004), they must be responsive and flexible enough to ensure the needs of multiple constituencies are met. To achieve this, Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, and Schneider (2003) identified seven critical areas of leadership: (1) instructional; (2) cultural; (3) managerial; (4) human resources; (5) strategic; (6) external development; and, (7) micropolitical.

The first critical area referred to instructional leadership, which entails placing emphasis on quality instruction, and the principal serves as the instructional leader by coaching, modeling, and supervising teaching and learning of the curriculum. The second critical area of leadership referred to cultural leadership. Cultural leadership implies having the ability to place emphasis on the school's climate, history, and traditions. School leaders must ensure that specific resources remain constant throughout the change process. The third critical area referred to managerial leadership. Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, and Schneider (2003) explained that budgets, schedules, transportation, personnel issues, and security are all examples of managerial leadership.

Human resources is the fourth critical area and Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, and Schneider (2003) point out that managerial leadership and the area of human resources are interrelated. Human resource activities entail identifying appropriate personnel as well as having the ability to document and dismiss personnel. The area of human resources requires the principal to provide leadership, mentoring, and continuous professional development opportunities to all levels of the faculty and staff.

The fifth critical area of leadership is identified as strategic leadership activities and requires establishing and promoting the school's vision and mission. Effective leadership is outlined in a principal's ability to map out a plan for achieving specific goals. External development is identified as the sixth area of leadership. External development denotes a principal's ability to promote the school within a constructive and positive framework. Principals represent the school in the community and develop

capital. External development leadership also requires the principal to place emphasis on public relations, the recruiting of teachers and students, buffering and mediating external interests, and advocating for the school's interest (Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, & Schneider, 2003).

The seventh and final area of leadership is referred to as micropolitical leadership, which implies ensuing autonomy. Principals must be cognizant of federal, state, and local interests and must be able to lead in spite of constraints and mandates from all levels. Consequently, they have complex roles of leading regardless of their levels of autonomy (Fowler, 2000).

Further review of the literature revealed additional insight into the role of the principal. Schmieder and Cairns (1996) placed emphasis on specific skills for effective principals. They surveyed 450 school-level administrators and found the role of an effective principal was contingent upon ten specific skills. The researchers' first skill mirrors that of Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, and Schneider's (2003) strategic leadership areas. As previously discussed, strategic leadership refers to school leaders placing emphasis on the school's vision and mission. A vision and mission enables principals to establish a plan for meeting outlined goals and objectives. An effective strategic leader has the ability to relay the school's vision and mission to all stakeholders: teachers, staff, parents, students, community, and business leaders (Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, & Schneider).

According to Schmieder and Cairns (1996), principals must first have the capabilities to establish an unambiguous vision that aligns the faculty, parents, and the community. The vision must have clear goals with concise steps for attainability. Second, principals must have a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of those they serve. Third, principals must have a clear understanding of the evaluation process and use evaluation as a tool for offering assistance when and where it is needed. Fourth, principals must be open and responsive to change. There is a need to recognize when change is taking place, and most importantly, principals must be aware of the need to coordinate and implement change. Fifth, effective principals have been identified as having the ability to recognize and accept their own strengths and weaknesses. It is equally as important to be aware of bias. Sixth, it is important for principals to possess the ability to conduct large and small group meetings, which must be productive and functional. The seventh skill involves having a strong sense of confidence and extremely high self-esteem.

Schmieder and Cairns' (1996) eighth skill requires principals to be cognizant of the need to serve in a variety of roles. Job responsibilities for principals have increased immensely over the last decade due to decentralization. Increased job responsibilities lead to focusing on the "real role" of the principalship (p. xvi). For example, it may be necessary to act as the custodian or the counselor. The ninth skill revealed that school level administrators must have the ability to engage all stakeholders in the education process. Parents, community leaders, business leaders, and church organizations must all

be included in educational planning. Finally, principals are viewed as public servants and therefore, their roles dictate a level of servant leadership which necessitates service to the school and the community. In these capacities, principals' actions are viewed by staff, students, parents, community, and colleagues; consequently, knowing ethical boundaries was rated a high priority (Schmieder & Cairns).

Role Influence

Matthews and Crow (2003) affirmed that prior to understanding the role of the principal, it is important to be cognizant of role conception. They shared that there are factors that will influence how a school leader will perform in the role of principal. Matthews and Crow defined role conception as the values and underlying assumptions that influence the way leadership is practiced. A principal's role is influenced by an image that is predetermined according to stakeholders, who include teachers, parents, students, community leaders, corporations, and possibly church activists. Moreover, the school board, superintendent, and politicians are extremely influential in establishing the principal's role.

In an effort to examine the perceptions of influence school principals believe they have on improving student achievement and their understanding of their role as an instructional leader, Jason (2001) conducted a study of urban elementary school principals. Principals who participated in the study were categorized into two groups; more experienced (six or more years) and less experienced (one to five years). An *Instructional Leadership Questionnaire* was developed and utilized to measure the

perceived influence that the principals felt they have had on improving student achievement in five areas: (1) shaping school culture; (2) creating a culture that is conducive to teaching and learning; (3) promoting and encouraging continuous professional development; (4) implementing instructional programs; and, (5) increasing parental involvement and support. Jason found that, while there were areas examined with no significant differences found between the groups, there were areas where the more experienced principals felt they had a greater level of influence than the less experienced principals. Two major findings were revealed. First, both groups believed they had the least amount of influence on parental involvement and support. Second, the more experienced principals reported a higher perception of influence in the areas of creating a culture conducive to teaching and learning and implementing instructional programs. In reference to role influence, Jason found that less experienced principals reported a lower opinion rating overall.

The greatest influence on role establishment is the environment and the needs of the stakeholders: students, parents, community, and business leaders. As the communities and areas in which a school is located begin to change, principals must be cognizant of the environment and adapt their leadership role accordingly. According to King (2002), "today's instructional leaders function in a constantly changing environment and serve students with greater and more diverse needs than ever before" (p. 63).

Corporate and Business Influence

The economic concerns of the 1980s created a sense of urgency and the formulation of local, state, and national business leaders to participate in education reform programs (Mickelson, 1999). Today many large corporations can be added to the list of stakeholders who influence the role of the principal. In areas where many corporate giants have partnered with public schools in establishing schools, the school is often required to incorporate the company's vision while expanding on the school district's goals and objectives for improving student achievement. Companies and corporations that finance public school initiatives often expect principals to play specific roles and execute distinct initiatives outlined by financiers. Often in these cases, the corporation's vision and mission overshadow district and state expectations for student achievement (Mickelson). As a result, there is a great deal of controversy centered on corporate influence. Corporate involvement rarely considers student achievement and established benchmarks for standardized tests, nor are corporations held accountable for the school's overall performance.

Mickelson (1999) referenced corporate influence and the lack of corporate accountability by emphasizing the IBM funded project, ProjectFirst (Fostering Instruction Through Service and Technology), which was implemented in Charlotte and Atlanta. IBM's Vice President of Corporation Community Relations designed the plan without input from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. Despite the fact that there were concerns with equity, fairness, and accountability, the \$2 million IBM grant was enough

for project implementation. Four schools were involved in the project, and principals had no influence as to how the project would be infused into each school's current plan for school improvement. This example demonstrated how role influence may be unidentifiable due to the influence of powerful outside entities.

Local, state, and national officials hold principals accountable for meeting state and national expectations. Therefore, role establishment for principals often becomes difficult due to the unrealistic responsibilities set forth. For example, a major technology company agrees to partner with a local public school in an inner city school community and agrees to build a state-of-the-art school in an inner city neighborhood. As a result, the curriculum has been altered and designed to meet the vision of the school's major funding source, the technology corporation. Walker (2003) validated this example by revealing in her study that the politics that plague education today add to the challenges that are set before school principals. Public schools serve multiple functions with a baseline goal and school administrators must be aware of the implications related to outside influences. School principals must possess a keen understanding of political, business, and corporate involvement in education, all of which may impact their abilities to function as effective school leaders (Fowler, 2000; Hoffman, 2000; Meade, 2004; Rooney, 2003).

Inner City School Principals

Should inner city school principals be assessed using the same performance appraisal systems as their counterparts assigned to suburban or high performing schools?

Should preparedness for the principalship be the same for all school administrators in any school setting whether urban, suburban, rural, high or low SES? Inner city and urban schools are inundated with communal challenges that affect the school and its ability to focus on education and meeting required standards as outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act. Howey (1999) stressed the importance of understanding the school in the community and how it influences the lives of students. The most obvious challenges are extreme poverty, violence, and drugs. In addition, the research of the Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education (as cited in Howey, 1999) disclosed several significant factors that are often not apparent to school administrators in low socioeconomic environments. These factors include limited or a lack of adult supervision, ineffective parental/guardian relationships, low or no set academic expectations, and early negative peer socialization. Each of these factors can negatively impact student achievement and thus the principals' performance appraisal.

Dandridge, Edwards, and Pleasants (2000) viewed urban principals as targets commissioned to educate urban students who are inundated with factors that guarantee academic failure. Upholding these findings, the research of Lippman, Burns, and McArthur (1996) revealed that schools in poor neighborhoods are adversely impacted because student achievement is affected by neighborhood characteristics. In addition to the significant factors revealed by UNITE, Wilson's study (as cited in Lippman, Burns, & McArthur) revealed that parents or guardians in low SES communities have high levels

of unemployment, low marriage rates, and weak communities, all of which negatively impact parent involvement in school.

Faced with innumerable challenges, principals of inner city schools are under tremendous pressure to ensure the attainment of higher tests scores and that the overall performance of the school is successful. Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) shared a general list of challenges that urban school principals face. Their list includes homelessness, extreme poverty, single-family homes, inadequate childcare, drug and alcohol abuse, gang affiliation, new immigrants, and child abuse and neglect. Moreover, many students are not only being raised in single-family homes, but a growing number of students in urban schools are being raised by grandparents or great-grandparents. Absenteeism, disruptive behavior, high mobility, and a lack of parental/guardian involvement are added concerns of inner city school principals (Bowers, 2000).

Inner city schools also encounter non-communal challenges that affect school performance and the desired performance of school administrators. Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) cited inadequate facilities, teacher attrition, and a need for more staff development as additional challenges for inner city schools. The researchers identified additional compounding negative factors in the quest for academic gains, including schools where the majority of the students are academically behind, lack social skills, and schools that are over-crowded.

Prevalent Characteristics of Inner City School Principals

Dandridge, Edwards, and Pleasants (2000) conducted a study in order to obtain the viewpoint of two urban school principals. The researchers focused on highlighting the urban principal as a stakeholder who performs within the midst of the crisis in public education with a voice that is marginalized. By studying and emphasizing the perspective of two urban principals, the authors discovered that urban school principals foster an understanding that it is to their advantage to build a collaborative community equally involving parents and teachers. By looking at these two urban school principals, the authors suggested urban principals are cognizant of the interdependence between the school, home, and community. The authors' findings further revealed that in order to achieve academic success for inner city students, urban principals have an obligation to establishing visions and missions that ensure ownership and collaboration and fosters the support of community agencies.

In order to illuminate the trends of characteristics of the urban principalship, Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez (2000) utilized a longitudinal national three-wave study conducted by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) that sought to examine the characteristics of principals with emphasis on the characteristics of inner city school principals. The research was conducted during the years of 1988, 1991, and 1994. Utilizing the research of the NCES, Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez found that the population of urban principals has become more diversified; urban principals are strong in their abilities to serve as instructional leaders; urban principals

spend more time as classroom teachers prior to becoming administrators; and, urban principals are highly educated. Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez defined highly educated principals as those who have training and education above a master's degree. The researchers found that most urban school principals are targeted for district-based training, specifically designed for the improvement of low performing inner city schools. Moreover, the researchers found that inner city school principals attended in-service training in the areas of instructional leadership, supervision, and techniques in improving management. The researchers shared concerns regarding their findings in the study as they related to the constraints placed on inner city school principals. Findings further revealed that although inner city school principals were found to be more experienced and strong instructional leaders, the limitations and challenges have caused their leadership roles as instructional leaders to slowly dissipate. Furthermore, the researchers found that prior to becoming principals, many inner city schools principals were afforded the opportunity to serve in various positions related to curriculum and instruction and that these principals tended to automatically assume the role of instructional leaders because of the challenges related to student achievement. Shen, Rodriguez-Gomez, and Rincones-Gomez explained that as with all principals, inner city school principals are equally as committed to curriculum and instruction; however, challenges related to the inner city school compels principals to place emphasis on areas that are clearly unrelated to curriculum and instruction such as, an environment of

disruption, family instability, poverty, malnutrition, poor health, lack of parental support, and unsafe communities.

Further research on the inner city school principalship examined the differences in the role of urban, suburban, and rural principals. Portin (2000) conducted a content analysis of the interview transcripts of the 12 urban school principals who participated in the Thousand Voices Project conducted by the University Council for Education Administration (UCEA). The transcripts provided information about the job of principals, how it had evolved, problems and challenges, and how they dealt with problems. The analysis generated four major themes from the content analysis of the urban principals' transcripts. Similar to other studies conducted to gain insight into the role of the inner city school principal, the researcher found that "increased job pressure" was the first major theme. Respondents referred to job pressure in terms of difficulty executing tasks and the growing amount of responsibility associated with the job. Unanimously, the principals indicated that the greatest pressure was the amount of time needed to manage day-to-day operations.

According to Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez (2000), the second theme referred to the principals' responsibility for coordinating non-instructional needs. The research revealed that there were an overwhelming number of social issues requiring the attention of inner city school principals. Inner city school principals must coordinate services that will address the many social issues affecting the school's ability to focus on student achievement. Notably, these issues are prevalent for all principals regardless of

the setting; however, these issues are inherently of a greater magnitude and more pronounced for inner city school principals. For instance, to highlight examples of coordinating non-instructional needs, one of the principals explained that the school had to arrange to have support groups assist students with dealing with problems such as death and dying, drug addiction, divorce, and any other dominant problem that hinder their academic progress.

The third theme disclosed by participants was mediating hopelessness. This theme refers to economic needs which foster a sense or feeling of hopelessness. Portin (2000) indicated that principals were most concerned with trying to address the educational needs of children who must deal with societal issues such as crime, drugs and unemployment, all of which contribute to a sense of hopelessness. Often times, principals are forced to address social, family, and personal needs of the students before addressing instructional needs.

The final major theme taken from the researcher's analysis was managing resources. This reoccurring theme described the challenge faced by principals in finding resources to secure funding. Principals are forced to spend time establishing partnerships with business and corporations who are willing to sponsor school programs. A great deal of time is spent on researching and writing grants to ensure adequate funding for schools. When examining the four themes, it is evident that they all negatively impact suburban, urban, and rural principals. Characterizations of the four patterns further indicated that the greatest challenges impacting the inner city school principalship related to political

skill, managing social needs of students, and managerial pressures. However, the magnitude to which school leaders are affected appears to be of great concern for urban school principals. The data suggested that urban principals may have a greater challenge as it pertains to entrepreneurial skills, political skills, and managing social complexity (Portin, 2000).

Further findings revealed that the inner city school principalship is far more complex and challenging. Portin (2000) was explicit in revealing the need for inner city school principals to communicate the challenges, which are not addressed when politicians establish criteria. In discussing implications, the researcher revealed that there is a need for inner city school principals to voice the uniqueness of the urban school principalship, particularly when faced with accountability issues.

Accountability for Principals

The literature examining performance-based accountability, as outlined in NCLB, highlighted the impact on principals in inner city schools. Johnson (2003) found that there is a limited amount of data on public attitude about performance-based accountability for principals. A 2003 survey conducted by Public Agenda (as cited in Johnson) revealed that 89% of principals recommended giving principals greater autonomy to run schools while holding them accountable for results. However, only 34% of principals felt their performance appraisals should be tied to students' standardized test scores. Many believed that there are too many factors beyond their control that impede student achievement (Johnson).

To gain a greater understanding of accountability policies the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (as cited in Goertz & Duffy, 2003) conducted a four-year study designed to examine how school districts establish and implement performance-based accountability systems. The Consortium for Policy in Research Education utilized eight states--California, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, and Texas for the study. Significant findings related to performance-based accountability for principals revealed that principal accountability was “ill-defined” (p. 7). In addition, performance goals for principals were obscure, and there were no formal or consistent consequences. The researchers further found that inner city school principals were often moved from one school to another or placed in alternative assignments. Principals are keenly aware that they could be fired or demoted if their schools fail to improve student performance (Goertz & Duffy).

According to Johnson (2004), more than 80% of the principals surveyed by the Public Agenda/Wallace Foundation were in total agreement that there should be some level of accountability for everyone as it relates to student achievement. Conversely, the greatest concern is evaluating principals according to student assessments and school performance solely. The Public Agenda/Wallace Foundation Survey questioned principals and superintendents, and the survey revealed that performance evaluations for principals are directly linked to test scores and student achievement (Johnson).

Utilizing performance-based evaluations for principals and linking them to accountability for failing schools confirms that there are little to no expectations or

responsibility for other key stakeholders of comprehensive educational reform and school improvement. Wong and Shen (2003) analyzed educational reform strategies for several big cities and found that urban school districts have failed even after major restructuring and reconstitution. Holding principals solely accountable is simply addressing the surface of the issues. Wong and Shen pointed out that teaching and learning is greatly impacted in high poverty schools and the constraints are magnified in the urban setting. Inner city school principals are faced with addressing needs of students who come from impoverished homes as well as impoverished neighborhoods. Clearly, inner city school principals face far greater challenges than principals assigned to middle and upper class schools and neighborhoods. Wong and Shen provided overwhelming insight and revealed data that present common results on national standardized reading tests. The research found that only 23% of fourth graders from inner city schools scored at the basic level or higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) norm-referenced reading test; whereas, 70% of the students in schools with less poverty performed the average or above on the NAEP. Wong and Shen postulated that there are significant challenges in trying to improve public education particularly in inner city school areas.

Many accountability systems place emphasis on overall student achievement as opposed to individual student learning gains which are rarely/minimally calculated in accountability results. Principals, primarily inner city school principals rely on disaggregated data to show instructional improvement. When measuring how much students are learning in a particular school or how much progress is being made,

researchers should be aware of the barriers that permeate inner city schools, barriers that can not be controlled by school leaders. When accountability systems do not recognize developmental growth of students from disadvantaged populations, schools are unfairly targeted as low performing (Doran, 2003). Most importantly, principals may be unfairly evaluated and labeled as ineffective leaders.

There is no randomization process for how students are assigned to schools. In reality, low income families tend to live in low income communities, and schools become a manifestation of the types of families within neighborhoods. As communities and neighborhoods change, schools will also change. Randomization is impossible, and therefore, accountability systems must be designed to consider the influence of external variables when evaluating the performance of a school (Doran, 2003). Accountability systems that have negative consequences for principals assigned to schools serving disadvantaged students without recognizing development growth is unwarranted (Doran).

The No Child Left Behind Act requires states to place greater emphasis on accountability. NCLB focuses on holding individuals accountable. According to Goertz and Duffy (2003), principals are currently the primary focus of accountability at the school level. In fact, the utilization of accountability data should be of no value when looking at the progress of an inner city school. According to Doran (2003), accountability systems should emphasize value-added analysis, which seeks to answer one fundamental question, “How much value has the school added to a student’s learning?” (p. 58). Value-added data analysis provides greater information into the actual performance of a school.

The researchers emphasized the need to utilize value-added data and other valid indicators in conjunction with qualitative school data to assess school performance. The utilization of value-added accountability systems ensures that qualitative data is included when assessing student progress and school performance (Doran). Accountability systems with negative consequences, primarily for principals assigned to inner city schools, require re-examination by federal, local, and state policymakers. Goertz and Duffy suggested establishing accountability systems that will assist in determining the true quality of a school and to steps in ensuring improvement as opposed to accountability data that is unreliable. They further indicated that current data analysis of student achievement is popular because they are simple to compute and justify; however, this is at the expense of teachers and students and primarily principals (Goertz & Duffy).

Performance Appraisal Systems

Performance appraisal is a process that assesses the performance of subordinates and generates information about subordinate effectiveness and efficiency. Subordinates may be characterized as principals who are evaluated annually by superintendents. Implementation differs, and appraisal systems should be designed around the expected usage (Aldakhilallah & Parente, 2002). A performance appraisal system may also be defined as “a structure and set of practices by which an institution provides formative and summative evaluations” (McAdams & Barilla, 2003, p. 19). Effective performance appraisals within a school district must be developed around the district’s philosophy and goals and by tailoring the appraisal process to individual goals (Marlow, 2002).

Performance evaluations serve many functions and several purposes. The research of Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000) found various reasons for the evaluation of principals. First, to fulfill requirements set forth by school boards, superintendents are required to conduct annual evaluations of principals' performance. Most requirements are outlined by state boards of education in order to ensure and increase effectiveness and to place emphasis on accountability (Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000). In addition, evaluations are conducted in order to provide information for certification and licensure, and to provide feedback for performance improvement.

McAdams and Barilla (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of research on acceptable practices for administrative performance appraisal systems for the purpose of developing a guide for good practice. The researchers targeted 496 of the 501 school districts in Pennsylvania utilizing a stratified random sampling in accordance with student enrollment. Of the 248 districts selected for the study, only 98 superintendents and 125 school level administrators responded to the survey. Using all of the existing data extracted from existing research and middle management appraisal systems, the researchers created a questionnaire for the principal participants. Several experts were utilized to conduct a content analysis of the questionnaire. The researchers found that the most effective systems were created around individual characteristics of effective principals. Based on existing research, findings revealed that there were four major components needed for an effective appraisal system: developmental, preparatory, formative, and summative. Notably, performance and program evaluation models

encompass precise steps to ensure effectiveness; however, many models are consistent and utilize specific and uniform components. For instance, Glatthorn (1993) presented a similar supervisory model designed to assess the performance of teachers, which has components similar to those revealed by McAdams and Barilla (2003). The Glatthorn model entails the utilization of a summative and formative component in the evaluation of performance for teachers, as well as to assist them with planning effective instruction.

In examining the McAdams and Barilla (2003) model for assessing school principals, the development component refers to the initial planning phase of what is to be evaluated at the end of the school year. The preparatory component involves examining the district's goals and then allowing the "evaluatee" to develop and plan according to the unique aspects of individual positions. The evaluator and evaluatee work to identify effective strategies for collecting data ultimately leading to evaluation. Individual needs are addressed in the preparatory phase. The formative component refers to data collection. During this phase, clear communication occurs between the supervisor and the administrator, and feedback is provided regarding performance. The formative component is designed to be ongoing so that the administrator has numerous opportunities for improvement prior to the annual evaluation. The fourth and final component is the summative component. Emphasis is on performance for the year. Collected data and artifacts are utilized and may affect job status and may be tied to compensation (McAdams & Barilla). Findings of the study suggested that school districts and policymakers should tailor their appraisal plans to meet the goals and objectives of

schools and individual administrators according to their particular positions (McAdams & Barilla).

In another study, Iwanicki (1999) examined the current standards for evaluating principals. The 1994 Successful Principals Study was conducted in two phases. First, Iwanicki asked principals in Connecticut to identify five colleagues they viewed as successful in enhancing teaching and learning. The researcher sought nominations and a total of 195 principals were nominated by their colleagues to participate in the study. Participants were asked to complete the *Successful Principal Survey*, which contained a list of the performance indicators for the standards used in evaluating principals for certification. Using a four-point scale, participants were asked to rate each performance indicator according to its relevance to success in their current positions. The findings revealed that the principals rated each of the standards moderate to highly important. The principals revealed that these performance indicators are relevant, but many are not indicative of what principals do on a daily basis. Findings from phase one were utilized for the second phase of the study. Consequently, in phase two, using a qualitative approach, the researchers sought greater understanding of what principals do on a day-to-day basis. Participants were divided into categories: suburban and urban. They were then divided by elementary, middle, or senior levels. The final sample for phase two involved the selection of the top three principals from each group according to the ratings received by colleagues in phase one. On-site observations, interviews, and document examinations relevant to improving teaching and learning revealed that most existing standards did not

provide real meaning to what principals actually do on a day-to-day basis and how their activities relate to enhancing teaching and learning (Iwanicki).

In a similar study, researchers conducted the National Leadership Evaluation Study (Reeves, 2004). The survey was utilized as a means of examining current leadership evaluation systems and the value of using evaluations to appraise the performance of principals. The effectiveness of evaluation systems should provide constructive and meaningful feedback to principals (Reeves). Consequently, the research further sought to determine how districts used evaluation systems and to what extent they provided information for improving leadership performance. Moreover, the researchers examined leadership evaluation instruments used in over 700 schools. The seven-month study included a sample of 510 administrators, all averaging a minimum of 11 years of administrative experience (Reeves).

Findings from the survey revealed that new administrators received more comprehensive feedback and coaching (Reeves, 2004). Feedback from evaluations to veteran principals appeared useless and did not provide sufficient advice for performance improvement. Approximately half of the evaluations conducted were tied to student achievement. A growing number of school districts are relating principal performance to student achievement and school grading. Marlow (2002) postulated that the reputation of principals has become linked to the public report cards on their schools' performances. The most significant finding appeared to be that leadership evaluations for administrators are inconsistent, ambiguous, and counterproductive (Reeves). Reeves also found

evaluation instruments to be contradictory, impossible, and highly dependant on the idiosyncratic judgment of the evaluator.

There are very few studies concerning the performance appraisal of administrative personnel. In fact, many of the existing studies found the administrative appraisal process to be implemented in a poor manner (McAdams & Barilla, 2003). Ginsberg and Thompson (as cited in Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000) described the research about evaluating school principals as “having a lack of empirically supported information about best practices” (p. 216).

Although there are numerous evaluation instruments and methods for evaluating school principals (Marlow, 2002), a precise, comprehensive, and clear evaluation system would allow principals to understand what is expected of their performance (Reeves, 2004). Effective and fair evaluations aimed at improving the performance of principals will enable principals to focus on being effective principals and, therefore, lead to more effective schools (Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000).

Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000) asserted that evaluation systems must be designed to assist school system in ensuring that principals and schools are effective. Hence, Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward identified three evaluation approach systems: results-based evaluation procedures, valid job descriptions, and personal qualities. According to Heck and Marcoulides (1996), the first approach, results-based systems relies strictly on outcomes such as test scores. Heck and Marcoulides stress that

principals should not be held accountable using results-based evaluation approach systems because they lack control over the variables of which these outcomes depend.

The evaluation approach system is centered on valid job descriptions. Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000) pointed out that this approach is recommended by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. The valid and non-generic job description approach emphasizes the utilization of job descriptions. The focus is on discrepancies of job performance expectations and actuality of performance. Stufflebeam and Nevo (as cited in Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward) further explained that job descriptions must be designed for individual principals with emphasis on local context and the priorities of individual schools.

The third approach referred to personal qualities of the principals. The evaluation approach of personal qualities emphasizes a principal's level of competency to improve academics and their effectiveness of running a school. Principals' personal qualities are based on specific competencies and their ability to perform according to the outlined competencies. According to Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000), the focus on personal qualities as an evaluation approach not only give emphasis to key competencies, but knowledge and skills of principals as well.

Accountability and Inner City Principals

Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000) indicated that principals should not be held accountable for outcomes affected by variables for which they have no control. There are many variables that impact student achievement, such as poverty, lack of parental

involvement, poor health, malnutrition, and absenteeism. Inner city school administrators are plagued by the threats of reconstitution, accountability, decentralization, and politically charged site-based management (Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000). Despite the challenges faced by inner city school principals, the expectations and appraisal systems are synonymous with those of principals who are assigned to schools where children may have had greater exposure to early childhood programs and other early learning strategies associated with early literacy, all of which lead to greater academic success (Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2004). The expectations for urban principals are the same although there may be more support and involvement in communities of high performing schools. There are many approaches to evaluating school principals and the approach should rely on the setting and purpose of the appraisal.

To date, there has been no study of the No Child Left Behind Act as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of inner city school principals. The mandates of NCLB have proven to be more of a challenge than a help for many inner city schools as they struggle to meet the outlined standards. The current generic job descriptions do not take into account the true role of the inner city school principal, and current evaluative methods are not designed to enhance the performance of principals (Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000). Moreover, NCLB is not the greatest challenge faced by inner city school principals. NCLB provides guidelines for improving academic achievement, however, it does not address the inner city schools greatest challenge of meeting the guidelines while

educating children who live in poverty and unsafe communities, lack parental involvement, suffer from malnutrition, poor health, family instability, and may have limited English proficiency (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996).

Literature Summary

Like other principals impacted by NCLB, principals assigned to inner city schools have conveyed concerns about the nexus of school level accountability, leadership effectiveness, complying with local, federal, and state mandates, competing with more affluent schools, and addressing the challenges that hinder student achievement. Studies suggested that NCLB has brought about great changes in accountability and responsibility for school level administrators. There are innumerable mandates to be implemented regardless of school classification. According to Johnson (2004), 80% of all principals find it a challenge to implement and comply with the mandates outlined in NCLB. The research identified the barriers faced by all principals as they try to implement and ensure compliance of local, state, and federal mandates (Borba, 2003; Johnson, 2004). Studies describing the barriers faced by principals were vague and did not address proposed repercussions related to performance evaluations, job duties, and responsibilities since the implementation of NCLB. However, the issues have been explored in very few studies with no emphasis on NCLB, inner city schools, and principal leadership effectiveness.

Several studies revealed that schools in poor neighborhoods are adversely impacted because student achievement is impacted by neighborhood characteristics, and

principals are faced with countless challenges (Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000; Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996). Although all principals are faced with challenges, inner city school principals are affected due to the kinds of challenges and the overwhelming number of challenges that confront them on a daily basis. Two studies described the challenges and increased responsibilities that are unique to inner city school principals (Borba, 2003; Johnson, 2004). Many studies described the non-communal challenges that affect school performance such as absenteeism, high mobility, lack of parental support and behavior (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996). One study reported the view point of two urban principals. The researchers described how urban principals focus on building a collaborative community involving parents and teachers (Dandridge, Edwards, & Pleasants, 2000). However, few studies provided information concerning principals' perspectives about leadership in the inner city school. In some studies, principals assigned to inner city schools reported strategies used to improve student achievement while others revealed the characteristics of successful inner city school principals (Portin, 2000; Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000)

Performance-based accountability, as outlined by NCLB, has had adverse affects on inner city school principals, particularly in areas where they have little or no control or areas that are not evaluated (Goertz & Duffy, 2003). However, like other principals, those assigned to inner city schools desired to be appraised and judged using an appraisal system that is indicative of their actual unique and necessary job functions. Studies revealed that principals working with disadvantaged populations are unfairly targeted as

low performing or ineffective (Doran, 2003). In several studies, it was suggested that most appraisal systems do not provide real meaning to what principals actually do on a daily basis (Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000). Stufflebeam and Nevo (as cited in Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward) found that job descriptions are generic and apply to all principals: inner city, suburban, urban, high performing, as well as low performing school principals. They further add that job descriptions do not take into account individual school priorities. Additionally, it was suggested that school districts concentrate on tailoring their appraisal plans with emphasis on goal and objectives unique to individual positions (Iwanicki, 1999; McAdams & Barilla, 2003).

The review of the literature revealed that there is a lack of research and articles discussing the impact of NCLB for principals assigned to inner city schools. There are no qualitative studies revealing the influence of NCLB on the role of inner city school principals. The literature is deficient in providing an understanding of the challenges and barriers that may exist for inner city elementary school principals since the enactment of NCLB. Enhancing understanding of the challenges associated in meeting the standards of NCLB for inner city school principals will assist politicians, school boards, superintendents, and other school leaders to better understand the need to be cognizant of and to address the true factors that impact upon student achievement. The literature is replete with studies that focus on inner city schools, NCLB, and the principalship. However, there are no studies that explore the lived experiences of principals in fulfilling requirements of NCLB in the inner city school setting.

Research studies suggested that business leaders play a major and historic role in the politics of urban education reform. Politicians strongly influence educational reform, and the actions of educators are controlled by their power (Hoffman, 2000; Viteritti, 2003). Although much of the research described political involvement in educational reform and suggested that there is low political involvement for school administrators (Fowler, 2000; Mead, 2004), few studies have described or addressed what inner city school principals face with meeting the needs set forth from educational reform. Even fewer studies addressed accountability and the impact for inner city school principals in meeting the goals outlined in NCLB from their perspectives, particularly the challenges and barriers that permeate the inner city school.

With the exception of a few studies, little information has been provided about personal perceptions and experiences of inner city school principals, the pressure of meeting the goals outlined in NCLB, and maintaining satisfactory performance appraisals. The studies suggested that due to the No Child Left Behind Act, the role of the principal has changed and requires a great deal of flexibility and diversity. Principals must be willing to serve in variety of roles from instructional leader to business manager to community activist. The principalship is overwhelming regardless of whether the school is urban, suburban, or rural, and the level of accountability has increased. The principal's role fluctuates according to the setting (Rooney, 2003; King, 2002). A study describing the lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city elementary schools will provide information concerning their perceptions of their roles and the challenges of

meeting outlined goals for student achievement and having the outcomes of student achievement and the schools' grades tied to maintaining satisfactory performance evaluations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of Chapter III is to explain the methods that were utilized to describe the lived experience of principals assigned inner city elementary schools faced with implementing the mandates outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act. The discussion begins with a description of the procedures used for sample selection and data collection. The chapter further gives a description of the method used for data analysis. Additionally, identification of procedures used to present the results of data analysis. The chapter concludes with a description of the methods utilized to minimize researcher bias and ensure quality and verification.

Context

The study will be conducted in a large urban school district geographically located in the southeastern part of the United States. The school district has approximately 375 schools, representative of all settings: inner city, suburban, rural, and schools with high and low socio-economic status (SES). Of the 375 schools, 206 are elementary schools. The school district has 185 Title I schools. Of the 185 schools, 136 are elementary schools. The district's Title I schools are identified as having 75% or more of its students participating in the free and reduced lunch program. The school districts elementary schools (non-charter) average 750 students. The elementary configurations range from schools with Pre-kindergarten through second grade and Pre-kindergarten

through fifth grade. Many of the elementary schools throughout the district have more than one site: Satellites and Primary Learning Centers.

Philosophical Paradigm

The theory of phenomenology describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The focus of this study is centered on the phenomenon that inner city school principals are faced with the same level of accountability for student academic progress as principals who are assigned to high performing/affluent class schools as dictated by the accountability of student achievement in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, the theory of hermeneutic phenomenology /constructivist-interpretive approach has been deemed an appropriate framework for this study. According to Jason (2000), the constructivist-interpretive approach and hermeneutic phenomenology are based on personal cultural experiences. Consequently, for this study the researcher will utilize the constructivist and the phenomenological perspectives in order to provide understanding of how different beliefs based on experiences affect the role of the principalship.

Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to identify and provide an understanding of the “variety of constructions” that exists about a phenomenon and to bring them into consensus. Hermeneutics seeks understanding rather than attempting to provide a theory (Annells, 1996). Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Annells) gave emphasis to the fact that the constructivist paradigm is often used interchangeably with hermeneutics. Guba and

Lincoln (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) further explained that hermeneutic phenomenological research is rooted in the constructivist belief system.

Gergen (as cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) delineated the constructivist approach as being “predicated on the assumption that the terms understood by the world are considered social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people” (p. 240). Denzin and Lincoln supported Gergen’s theory and added that “realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature” (p. 206). Moreover in selecting this theory, Denzin and Lincoln postulated that realities are created based on individual and personal meaning of a phenomenon or concept.

Principals assigned to inner city schools share similar experiences. A study about the lived experiences of principals who are accountable for student academic success in inner city schools can be determined by understanding those who have had the experiences and are able to provide comprehensive description (Moustakas, 1994). Unlike their colleagues assigned to suburban schools, inner city school principals have frontline experience with impoverished students and with the impact of school, familial, and community deficiencies (Johnson, 2000). The social construct of each individual administrator and his/her unique social encounters provides meaning and understanding as it relates to the impact of the No Child Left Behind legislation on the achievement of low achieving students.

Principals' perceptions and opinions regarding the impact of risk factors contribute a legitimate source of information; they filter experience through individual, collective and cognitive structures (Johnson, 2000). This study focuses on the phenomenon of principals assigned to inner city schools that are governed by the same standards and requirements of principals assigned to suburban schools. This study aims to explore and describe the challenges and barriers of inner city school principals who are expected to yield the same results on high stakes standardized test as their colleagues. Schwandt (1998) postulated that constructivists seek understanding of the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it. Further, the constructivists hold the belief that in order to comprehend the world of meaning, it must be interpreted. Creswell (2003) proposed that qualitative researchers who utilize social constructivism as an alternative process are aware that subjective meanings are shared and discussed in a social and/or historical context. Creswell further indicated that constructivist researchers often address how individuals interact and how knowledge can not simply be discovered. "We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience and we continually test and modify these constructions in light of new experience (Schwandt, p. 237).

Phenomenological research is rooted in the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist approach is predicated on the assumption that people seek understanding and impart personal meanings of their experiences of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2003). Moreover, Creswell explained that the constructivist

researcher's intent is to interpret and provide meanings that others have about the world. Researchers make interpretations based on what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researchers' own experiences and background.

The ontology, epistemology, and methodology provide insight into a specific study. The methodology and philosophy becomes the framework of a particular kind of inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) declared constructivism exemplifies an alternative paradigm which advocates ontological realism as opposed to ontological relativism. Ontologically, when conducting qualitative research, the researcher stands on the philosophical conviction that realities are encapsulated and may exist in multiple forms which are socially and experientially based. Additionally, realities are intangible mental constructions that are local and specific in nature (Denzin & Lincoln). Using phenomenology enables the researcher to study the concept of how people experience a phenomenon. The researcher must capture the "essence" of human experiences concerning the specific phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, 2003). In keeping with the social constructivist paradigm, Creswell and Urbom (as cited in Creswell) explained that the ontological perspective requires acknowledging that multiple realities may exist, and therefore, each thematic issue will generate multiple perspectives for reporting. The ontology of constructivism reveals that realities can be acquired in the form of "multiple, intangible mental constructions" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 206). In this study, the ontological perspective will be revealed by the emergent thematic issues that surface during interviews and throughout the data collection and analysis process.

In terms of constructivism, the epistemological assumption is based on the belief that the researcher and the participants are “interactively linked,” which can be achieved through lengthy observations or collaboration (Creswell, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) further asserted that as the investigation progresses, findings will emerge. For this work, extensive collaboration between the researcher and participants will be utilized throughout the data collection and data analysis process. The constructivist methodology posits that as the researcher and the participants interact and converse about experiencing the phenomena, individual essence and meaning will begin to emerge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The epistemological assumption of constructivism requires the researcher to interact with the participants, so that findings are created as the investigation progresses. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) indicated that the constructivist methodology aims to achieve a consensus construction that is highly developed and provides comprehensive information in comparison to previous constructions. Denzin and Lincoln described the constructivist methodology as hermeneutical and dialectical. The implication is that “the variable and personal nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined through interaction between and among investigator and respondents” (p. 207). Hence, it is appropriate that a constructivist philosophy will provide the foundation for the study of the No Child Left Behind Act and the impact it has on the role of inner city elementary school principals.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

At the onset of the study, the researcher sought to examine the perception of leadership effectiveness and to explore how inner city school principals rate their leadership effectiveness in comparison to principals assigned to other settings: suburban, rural, and schools with high and low socio-economic status (SES). Initially, the researcher sought to determine if inner city school principals were more or less effective and successful when compared to principals assigned to other settings. After reviewing the literature, it has been determined that there are numerous instruments, questionnaires and theories formulated about the inner city school principalship. A comparison of leadership effectiveness and perceptions of principals in different settings described in other studies proved adequate. Quantitative studies suggest there is adequate information pertaining to the topic of inner city school principals and their role. Conversely, there is inherently a lack of qualitative studies exploring the phenomenon of being a principal assigned to an inner city implementing mandates outlined in NCLB.

What does it mean to be a principal in an inner city school, dealing with poverty, violence, crime, disciplinary problems, poor attendance, lack of support, high rate of adult literacy, widely diverse student population, low graduation rates, a disproportionate number of students with disabilities, high teacher attrition, low test scores, high administrative turnover, community violence, and being responsible for implementing NCLB and meeting the goals outlined in the mandate? Does it mean that principals

assigned to inner city schools can voice their experience by utilizing a Likert scale? Will a scale of one to five provide true meaning of the phenomenon?

A qualitative study will allow the researcher to collect data and obtain rich, thick descriptions as viewed by participants who have experienced the phenomenon.

Qualitative research will allow the researcher to provide detailed descriptions through in-depth inquiry while capturing participant's personal perspectives and experiences (Patton, 1990). According to Creswell (2002), qualitative methodology is utilized to examine a research problem in which the researcher explores and seeks understanding of a central phenomenon. Creswell further explained that exploration is necessary when little is known in the literature about the phenomenon and the researcher will learn more from participants. The establishment of the research problem for this study revealed that there are no variables and no theories available to explain the behaviors of participants (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, to adequately assist inner city elementary school principals, it is important to know what being assigned to an inner city school is to the ones who experience it. Patton further added that qualitative research is a holistic approach and the researcher views the phenomenon as a complex system with emphasis on the phenomenon in an overall context. This study will provide previously omitted perspectives on the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on the role of the inner city elementary school principal by including qualitative methodology.

Rationale for a Phenomenological Study

The purpose of the study is to describe the lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city elementary schools and their challenges in complying with the mandate of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The study will give a voice to principals who have received few opportunities to explain their experiences of being assigned to an inner city elementary school. Utilizing the qualitative phenomenological approach, the researcher seeks to highlight the inner city elementary school principalship, the impact of NCLB on the role of principals and the accountability of the law. The focus will concentrate on the participants lived experiences.

The phenomenological approach aims to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). According to Moustakas, empirical phenomenology involves the investigation of experiences and being understood. He further contended that phenomenology requires the participants to return to experiences so that comprehensive descriptions may be obtained in order to provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that depicts the essence of the experience. According to Van Kaam (as cited in Moustakas), “a preconceived, experimental design imposed on the subject of an experiment, and statistical methods, may distort rather than disclose a given behavior through an imposition of restricted theoretical constructs on the full meaning and richness of human behavior” (p. 12). Hence, a phenomenological qualitative design is appropriate.

Role of the Researcher

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) proposed that qualitative observational research involves the formulation of a relationship that is intimate between the researcher and research participants. The relationship is one that becomes personal and confidential. Most importantly, Connelly and Clandinin suggested the researcher must identify and establish the appropriate role in order to ensure facilitation of the study and that there is full acceptance by the participants in the study group. Furthermore, the researcher will serve as the questioner and the recorder of information. In addition, the researcher will disclose personal experiences as they pertain to being assigned as principal of an inner city elementary school, as appropriate. Phenomenological research requires the researcher to “conduct and record lengthy person-to-person interviews that focus on a bracketed topic and question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104).

In serving as interviewer and interpreter of personal experiences, the researcher role is one of bricoleur-theorist, as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (1998). These researchers explained that the bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by ones personal history, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the participants. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln indicated that the bricoleur presents a “bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collagelike creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis” (p. 4). The researcher will present the stories that principals tell of their

experiences in meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act while working in the inner city elementary school setting.

Researcher Bias

A researcher's perspective may be affected by personal feelings, attitudes, and values as they relate to the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Functioning as the primary instrument of analysis and interpretation, it is important to provide information regarding personal experiences and prejudices prior to commencing the study (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher has to reveal all knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and expose all preconceptions and beliefs (Moustakas). For this study, the researcher will adhere to the suggestions of Moustakas and utilize the epoche process prior to conducting interviews. Moustakas defined the epoche process as, "setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (p. 85). Creswell maintained that epoche is based on phenomenological principals that require the researcher to bracket personal preconceived ideas about the phenomenon and to be certain that the voices of the participants are dominant.

Keeping with the process of epoche, the researcher will reveal a personal view of being a principal and disclose personal experiences of being assigned to an inner city elementary school as a part of the study. The researcher recognizes the need to expose personal bias toward the No Child Left Behind mandate and the impact of accountability on inner school principals. The researcher further believes that local, state, and federal

mandates are approved without collaboration or solicitation of input from those most affected with the highest level of accountability for inner city school principals.

The researcher holds to the premise that various mandates are established without addressing the true issues impacting student achievement, such as the need for regulations to enforce parental involvement and participation in education. It is clear to the researcher that accountability is inevitable; however, it is believed that the impact of accountability has to be distinctive to all stakeholders. Upon beginning this research project, the researcher believed that inner city school principals were concerned that their performance would be tied to outcomes of state testing and school performance grades. The researcher further believed that performance appraisals for principals may be impacted negatively because of school grading. Available research highlights the impact of the principalship since the implementation of NCLB with little emphasis on the impact of accountability on school level administrators. In order to highlight the true experiences of inner city elementary school principals without imposing personal bias, the researcher will place strong emphasis on the suspension of judgment which will ensure that the voices of the principals are reported.

Another bias that must be reported relates specifically to the researcher's interest and personal attempt to voice the need to revise performance appraisal systems so that they reflect the true work and experiences occurring in the different school settings: inner city, suburban, and rural. There is a movement towards tying school performance grades to the actual performance of the school's principal. Although currently this practice

appears to be rare, it is still considered to be a bias that could affect data collection and analysis. It is the perception of the researcher that federal, state, and local officials do not consider extraneous factors that impact student achievement when creating mandates.

To circumvent bias, several methods will be utilized. Creswell (1998) suggested using a minimum of two verification methods. In addition to revealing personal bias, the researcher will utilize the process known as member checks (Creswell; Patton, 1990), in which all transcribed interviews will be shared with participants in order to ensure proper transcription and corrections will be made accordingly. The researcher's primary focus will be on biases related to personal beliefs associated with being a principal in an inner city school with high poverty. To that end, rich, thick, detailed description and the use of direct quotes of the participants will further assist in avoiding bias in the analysis of data (Creswell; Moustakas, 1994). Consequently, a journal will be utilized, as the researcher will constantly document personal thoughts and beliefs about the experience of the participants. For example, based on the existing literature review and some studies, the researcher believes that federal, state, and local officials mandating the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 have little or no clear understanding of the true challenges that hinder academic progress in inner city schools. The researcher has formed the opinion that inner city school principals are not evaluated according to the numerous responsibilities related to the unique problems of inner city school students and their families, problems that must be addressed prior to implementing a school wide curriculum.

Data Generation

For the purpose of this study, inner city schools are defined as high poverty schools with 75% or more students eligible for free or reduced lunch. This means that the school has 75% or more students at or below the federal poverty guidelines (FPG). The free/reduced lunch eligibility is established according to the federal poverty guidelines. The federal poverty guidelines serve as the standard marker for poverty. The current FPG is \$18,400 for a family of four. For the purpose of this study, five principals assigned to elementary schools located within a school district geographically located in the southeastern part of the United States with 90% or more students on free or reduced lunch were elected. In addition, the elementary school five principals must have been assigned for a minimum of three to five years to inner city elementary schools with 90% or more of its students living in poverty as outlined by the federal free and reduced lunch program guidelines. Selection of the five elementary school principals was based on the researcher's relationship with the principals assigned to the schools and the first eligible five principals to respond.

Upon obtaining permission from the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), all procedures were adhered to as outlined by the district's Office of Education and Evaluation in order to obtain permission to conduct the study utilizing selected principals. A letter of approval from the school district's Office of Education and Evaluation was also provided to prospective participants. The letter of approval indicates that the researcher has followed the school district's policy in obtaining permission to

conduct the research project. Finally, a letter of consent (see Appendix A) was sent to all prospective participants. The informed consent detailed and outlined the purpose of the study, including the methodology and its relevance to them as participants (see Appendix A). In addition, the letter of consent contained specific information regarding confidentiality of participation.

Sample Selection

For the study, the sample of research participants was drawn from a list of the school district's Title I elementary schools with a minimum of 90% of the students on free or reduced lunch. Five principals with a minimum of three to five years working in an inner city elementary school utilized for this study. Dukes (as cited in Creswell, 1998) postulated that a phenomenological study should consist of three to ten participants.

Creswell (1998) contended that a phenomenological study should utilize a much more narrow range of sampling strategies. A criterion-based purposeful sample selected, as recommended by Creswell (2003). The use of criterion-based purposeful sampling ensured that all participants have experienced the phenomenon and meet the criteria of working in an elementary school with 90% or higher of students on free or reduced lunch (Creswell). As delineated by Creswell (1998), phenomenological research requires a narrow range of sampling and "it is essential that all participants experience the phenomenon being studied" (p. 118). Consequently, a criterion sample was utilized for this study. The researcher ensured that all five participants have experienced the same phenomenon. The five participants comprise of inner city elementary school principals

with three or more years of experience who work in a school with 90% or higher of students on free or reduced lunch that has received a rating/letter grade of C, D, or F.

Instruments

The researcher utilized an interview protocol designed specifically for gathering data for this study. Interview questions emerged and were extracted from the extant and comprehensive literature review. In keeping with Creswell's (2003) recommendation, for this study the interview protocol (Appendix B) consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions designed to obtain as much information as possible while allowing the participants to share their perspectives. Additionally, in order to clarify information and encourage participants to expand on ideas, the researcher will use *probe*, which assisted the researcher in obtaining additional information (Creswell). Questions were added and additional interviews were requested to ensure adequate data generation and clarity of responses. Moreover, the researcher remained cognizant of the need to restructure interview questions in order to ensure full understanding of each question by the participants.

Data Collection and Processing

Upon selecting the participants, the process of data collection commenced with in-depth semi-structured, open-ended questions. The one-to-one, face-to-face interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. In keeping with Creswell's (2003) suggestion of probing, the researcher utilized clarifying points in order to elicit as much information as possible for data analysis. Therefore, participants were informed that an additional 15-20

minute interview may be needed. In order to review the transcripts, participants were advised that an additional 30 minutes may be necessary. Follow-up interviews were requested as needed.

Data Record Keeping

In an effort to ensure confidentiality of the research participants, the researcher adhered to the record keeping processes described by Creswell (1998). After digitally recording and transcribing interviews, the researcher properly stored and secured all data. The researcher checked and reviewed the digitally recorded interviews for the purpose of ensuring accuracy. Transcriptions were stored using word processing software. Additionally, the transcripts were maintained in ASCII file format in order to facilitate the entry of data into analytic software known as *Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing (NUDIST)*. Once the data analysis process was completed, the researcher destroyed all recordings. All transcriptions are and will remain stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office for five years, as required by the Institutional Review Board, after which time all documents will be destroyed. To further protect confidentiality, the audio tapes were destroyed one month following the interviews after the participants verify the accuracy of the researcher's transcripts.

Data Analysis

For use in phenomenological research, Creswell (1998) recommended following a systematic method of data analysis. In keeping with Creswell's recommendation the researcher utilized a method created by Stevick, Colaizzi and Keen and later modified by

Moustakas (1994). The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis requires the researcher to adhere to specific steps and repeat the procedural method for each participant, which include epoche, horizontalization, invariant meaning horizons, textural descriptions, structural descriptions/imaginative variation, and textural-structural descriptions.

First, prior to conducting interviews the researcher engaged in a period of *epoche* which requires the researcher to reveal personal experiences pertaining to the phenomenon. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher must avoid supposition and “to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” (p. 86).

The second step of the data analysis process, *horizontalization*, requires the researcher to look at the transcripts and identify statements and phrases relevant to how the participants experience the phenomenon and allotting all key phrases and statements equal value. The researcher worked to reach saturation by creating a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements (Creswell, 1998).

Following horizontalization, the researcher grouped the *meaning units* in order to identify and establish themes, which is identified as *invariant meaning horizons*.

In the next step, *textural description*, the researcher is required to reveal how individual participants experienced the inner city elementary school principalship, as it relates to mandates imposed by NCLB, and determine *what* happened in the participants’ experience. The researcher has included verbatim examples in the presentation of findings.

The process of *structural descriptions or imaginative variation* involves seeking all “possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). Moustakas further indicated that the aim of imaginative variation is to arrive at structural descriptions, hidden, and sudden issues that could explain what is being experienced. To that end, the researcher wrote a structural description referencing *how* individual participants’ experience the phenomenon of being a principal assigned to an inner city elementary school. Emphasis for writing the structural description requires the researcher to explore all possible meanings. The researcher reflected on significant statements, phrases, and words provided by the participants. Moustakas (1994) described this as the reflective phase for the researcher. Creswell (1998) further added that during this step the researcher provides a description of *how* the phenomenon was experienced by each participant.

In the next step of data analysis, *textural-structural descriptions*, the researcher created a composite description of each co-researchers’ experience as recommended by Moustakas (1994). The textural-structural descriptions are presented as the summary for the essence of the experience. The final step requires an integration of the composite textural and composite structural descriptions, providing a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience to be presented in the findings (Moustakas). The researcher

has used rich, thick description punctuated by direct quotes from the participants in order to capture the true essence of the participants lived experiences.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues must be a priority in any kind of research. However, ethical issues in qualitative research studies are subtle and different when compared to problems in quantitative research (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001; Patton, 1990). Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden further added that any research involving people requires an awareness of the ethical issues surrounding the interactions and researchers must “address initial and ongoing tensions between the needs and goals of the research and the rights of participants” (p. 93). Consequently, this study adhered to the guiding principles of ethics as outlined by Creswell (1998), Denzin and Lincoln (1998), and Moustakas (1994).

Moustakas (1994) proposed the researcher should provide an explicit agreement regarding research intent. The written agreement should provide full disclosure as to the nature and purpose of the study. To that end, the researcher utilized a letter of informed consent (Appendix A) to ensure adequate and unambiguous information. The consent emphasized research participation is strictly voluntary and there would be no adverse effects should invited participants choose to decline. Moreover, potential participants were made aware of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time.

Moustakas (1994) further revealed that the researcher must inform the participants of all involved risks and possible benefits. For this study, the risks of involvement were

minimal. Risks include divulging personal information and confidential discussions related to participants' experiences as an inner city elementary school principal. The benefits to participants were also minimal. Participants in this study may provide insight and serve as the voice for principals assigned to inner city elementary schools. From a qualitative perspective, participants in this study may help provide an understanding as to how the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has impacted the role and effectiveness of the inner city elementary school principal in meeting local, state, and federal mandates.

In terms of ethics, Creswell (2003) proposed the implementation of member checking. For this study, during data analysis the researcher implemented member checks by collaborating with participants regarding specific descriptions and themes to ensure accuracy and rich, thick descriptions will be utilized (Creswell, p. 196). This was accomplished by sending participants copies of the transcripts for their review and to ensure accuracy.

Confidentiality Issues

Participants were also assured that strict measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality. Steps included the use of pseudo-names of principals and schools to preserve identity, conducting interviews in a mutually agreed upon private location, securing data, and sharing data prior to publication (Creswell, 1998). Participants were informed that the audio taped interviews will be destroyed one month following the interviews after the participants verify the accuracy of the researcher's transcriptions.

Quality and Verification

According to Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991), reliability and validity apply to both quantitative and qualitative work; however, reliability and validity are viewed and arrived at in different ways. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (1998), in qualitative research methods, trustworthiness denotes *internal validity*; the extent to which the researchers' observations are true descriptions of a particular reality and *external validity* refers to the degree to which the descriptions can be accurately compared with other groups. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) revealed that qualitative research processes must be impartial and the interpreted data must be truly indicative of the experiences of the people who are studied. Kincheloe and McLaren further cautioned that the total research project must be premised on ethical principles about how the researcher will collect and analyze data. According to Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003), threats to trustworthiness can be addressed by adhering to specific strategies: truth-value through credibility; applicability through transferability; consistency through dependability; and neutrality through confirmability. They further added there are numerous methods to validate the strategies.

Credibility

To ensure research credibility, the researcher employed several methods suggested by Creswell (1998), Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991), and Krefting (1991). First, a *reflexive journal* was kept throughout the collection and analysis of data. The researchers used the journal as a "personal dialogue about moments of

victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases and ongoing ideas about method” (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, p 69). Reflexive field journaling allowed the researcher to remain preoccupied with potential biases and preconceived assumptions that may influence data analysis and reporting.

Member check was used as a second source of establishing credibility. Creswell (1998) described member checking as the process of asking participants to check the interpretations for accuracy. The researcher sent the transcripts to each participant for his/her review.

The third source of establishing credibility was by means of *peer review*. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described peer review as a means to keep the researcher honest by asking hard questions about data collection and analysis. The researcher elicited the support of a professor holding a doctoral degree who is familiar with the coding processes of phenomenological research. Additionally, a colleague who is knowledgeable of the coding process was asked to assist in examining the researcher’s data collection and analysis processes. The colleague was required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C). As a final step in establishing credibility, the researcher’s dissertation committee served as final experts.

Transferability

According to Creswell (1998), rich, thick description enables the researcher to address issues related to transferability. The researcher has an obligation to provide ample data that would ensure transferability of judgments by other researchers (Krefting,

1991). Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) stated that the researcher can address transferability by describing the demographic contexts of each participant and giving a dense and rich description. To that end, the researcher used rich, thick description punctuated by direct quotes from the participants in order to capture the true essence of the participants lived experiences.

Dependability

Dependability can be defined as the consistency of findings in a qualitative study (Krefting, 1991). In addition to utilizing rich, thick description to ensure dependability, the researcher utilized the process of an external audit. External audits allow the researcher to examine both the process and the product of the research study (Creswell, 1998). Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) added that dependability can be ensured by an audit of the data collection and analysis processes. The researcher gave the auditor access to all digital recordings, verbatim transcripts and field notes. The external auditor was required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C). The external audit provided evidence that the analyses were based on data that can be confirmed by an apparent nexus to the original sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In keeping with the recommendations of Creswell and Lincoln and Guba, the researcher subjected the data collection and analysis process to external auditing via a colleague who is knowledgeable of qualitative procedures. Additionally, adhering to the suggestion of Krefting, and Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003), the researcher utilized qualitative analytic software and applied *code-*

recode procedures. Code-recode involves coding the data, waiting for a period of time, and later, recoding and comparing the results.

Confirmability

In this study, an external audit served two purposes: to ensure dependability and as well as to enhance confirmability. The researcher followed the suggestions of Krefting (1991) and Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) by utilizing reflexivity methods and external audit. Confirmability can be ensured by providing a trail of evidence for participants to follow and check whether they would arrive at similar conclusions (Poggenpoel & Myburgh). Additionally, to ensure confirmability, this document provides demographics, detailed information, and direct quotes to fellow researchers for review.

Replication of a qualitative research study will not yield the same findings because of time and context sensitivity (Creswell, 1998). The most crucial aspect of a qualitative study is having results consistent with the data collected. As the researcher looks for repetition in the data and for meaning, reflexive journaling, member checks, the process of peer review, and rich, thick description were continuously incorporated to ensure standards of quality and verification throughout this qualitative study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter identifies explanations of the processes regarding methodology, sample selection, and data collection. The discussion identified the criteria for sample selection and the strategies that were used to introduce the study to inner city elementary school principals responsible for ensuring implementation of mandates that have been

outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act. The chapter included the methodology and procedures that were used to define the philosophical paradigm, a rationale for qualitative and phenomenological research, the researcher's role and bias, data generation, sample selection, and the method of data analysis.

The researcher utilized the constructivist paradigm also referred to as hermeneutical and dialectical (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In an effort to explore the phenomenon of being a principal assigned to an inner city elementary school implementing the mandates outlined in NCLB, the researcher determined that a qualitative study was appropriate. The rationale for a phenomenological study stems from the researcher's aim to highlight the lived experiences of inner city elementary school principals as they relate to the challenges of implementing NCLB.

Further discussion identified the researcher's role and steps to address bias. The researcher's role is one of questioner and recorder of information. Further, the researcher served as bricoleur. In addition to utilizing the process of epoche, as recommended by Creswell (1998), two measures were utilized to minimize the researcher's biases—member check and journaling. The researcher bracketed all personal preconceived ideas about the phenomenon. All transcribed interviews were shared with the participants and corrections will be made accordingly. The use of rich, thick description further avoided bias. The researcher documented personal thoughts and beliefs about the experiences of the participants.

As recommended by Dukes (as cited in Creswell, 1998) a phenomenological study should consist of three to ten participants. Consequently, a criterion sample of five principals assigned to inner city elementary schools within a large urban school district geographically located in the southeastern part of the United States participated in the study. The selection is based on principals assigned for a minimum of three to five years to inner city elementary schools with 90% or more of its students living in poverty as outlined by the federal free and reduced lunch program guidelines and a letter grade of C, D, or F. The researcher's interview protocol consisted of semi-structured open-ended questions with emphasis on the utilization of probes.

Data have been stored, secured, recorded, and transcribed as required by the Institutional Review Board. All transcripts were maintained in ASCII file format. In an effort to address ethical issues, a written agreement served as full disclosure as to the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were informed that the risks of involvement are minimal, which included divulging personal and confidential discussions. The implementation of member checks and pseudo-names ensured confidentiality. This chapter further discussed ways of addressing internal and external validity, which included a reflexive journal, member checks, peer review, rich, thick descriptions, and the application of code-recoding.

Data analysis was conducted by utilizing the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method described by Moustakas (1994) for data analysis, a method which requires the researcher to engage in self-reflection or epoche. Following the process of epoche,

horizontalization applied in order extract all relevant statements. In order to describe the essence of the experience, the statements were then clustered into themes, creating textural descriptions of the experience, including verbatim illustrations.

CHAPTER IV
THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter IV describes the findings that emerged from data collected by utilizing an interview protocol. Following a description of the participants, the discussion continues with the descriptions of the themes that derived during the data analysis process. The major themes and minor themes emerged when categories of data in the transcripts were analyzed in an effort to identify common characteristics throughout the transcripts. This chapter describes meaning that emerged from the lived experiences of principals assigned to work in the inner city school setting faced with fulfilling the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to give a voice to inner city elementary school principals undertaking the task of meeting goals and avoiding the potentially negative consequences of NCLB. The data collection consisted of semi-structured, open-ended, audiotaped interviews with participants. Interview questions were extracted from the comprehensive literature review. The current literature review revealed that there is sufficient information and studies conducted regarding leadership effectiveness, perception, and the role of the inner city school principal. However, the literature further revealed that there is insufficient research exploring the phenomenon of being an inner city school principal working to meet the mandates outlined in NCLB. Understanding and examining the experiences of being an inner city school principal in

the era of NCLB accountability calls for a qualitative methodology (Creswell, 2002). Consequently, the phenomenological approach was utilized for collecting and interpreting data. This enabled the researcher to implement and construct a broad and specific understanding of responses to the selected interview protocol.

The semi-structured, open-ended interviews provided rich and detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences. Data analysis included utilizing the modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methodology (Moustakas, 1998) of data analysis. First, the researcher engaged in self-reflection or epoche prior to conducting research interviews. After completing the research process with the five participants, the researcher personally transcribed the data verbatim. Next, the researcher utilized the process of horizontalization as a means of extracting pertinent and common statements. Careful review of the transcripts and the color coding of each category, enabled the researcher to group the meaning units in an effort to establish and identify themes (Moustakas, 1994). As recommended by Creswell (1994), following the identification of words and phrases and dividing them into categories followed by establishing major and minor themes, the researcher utilized the NUDIST N-6 software to further assist with categorically sorting and storing data.

A review of the researcher's reflexive journal took place throughout the data analysis process to ensure that the experiences, thoughts, and verbiage were that of the participants. Additionally, each participant was provided a copy of the transcripts prior to data analysis.

Participant Demographics

This section summarizes descriptive data that includes the principals' ages, gender, levels of education and experience in various settings since becoming a school administrator (See Table 4.1). Additional data describes each principal's current school profile. Information provided includes the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch, and pertinent information outlined according to NCLB--the schools' current grade, and the status of the schools' ability to meet adequate yearly progress (see Table 4.2).

An acronym (Inner City School Principal-ICSP) followed by a number was used to identify each participant. Five inner city school principals participated in the study. The participants' ages ranged from 43-53. The education levels of the principals were all above the Master's level. Two of the five principals have earned a Specialist degree or higher. Two principals have doctoral degrees in Educational Leadership. The interviews further revealed that two of the five principals disclosed having prior experience in an inner city school before being appointed to their current positions.

During the first part of the interview, each principal described his/her years of experience as principal and the discussion provided information as it pertains to working in other SES settings. Four of the five principals revealed having experience in other educational settings. Each principal had 3 or more years of experience working as an inner city school principal as evidenced and verified by the district's public administrators' profile. Consequently, they all met criteria for inclusion in this study. The mean years of experience for the principals totaled 7.2 years. The mean years of

experience as an inner school principal are 4.6 years. The participants expounded on their educational background and described their professional educational leadership careers. Of these five inner city school principals, one has only worked in inner city schools.

Table 4.1 represents the data collected during each interview and the review of the demographic data revealed specific information about each participant’s overall years of experience.

Table 4.1

Participants’ Demographic Information

Participant’s Identification Number	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Level of Education	Years as Principal	Years as Inner City Principal
ICSP-1	45	Female	Black	Ph.D.	10	10
ICSP-2	49	Female	White	Ed.S.	7	3
ICSP-3	53	Male	Hispanic	Ed.S.	5	3
ICSP-4	52	Female	Black	Ed.D.	8	3
ICSP-5	43	Male	Black	M.S.	6	4

Table 4.2

Participants' School Demographic Information

Participant's Identification Number	Percentage of Students on Free/Reduced Lunch	School Grade	AYP Status
ICSP-1	94.9	C	No
ICSP-2	93.2	D	No
ICSP-3	94.4	C	No
ICSP-4	96.6	D	No
ICSP-5	96.7	C	Yes

Note. The abbreviation, ICSP refers to the participants--Inner City School Principal.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) denotes the status of their assigned schools as it pertains to subgroups meeting requirements outlined in the states plan in accordance with No Child Left Behind Act.

During each interview, the setting was comfortable with little or no intermissions and none of the principals experienced any discomfort during the interview process. The principals were passionate and extremely loquacious when sharing their experiences. Because of the relationship and commonality with the researcher, the principals answered each interview question candidly. Four of the five audio taped interviews were conducted in the office of each participant. The fifth interview took place in the office of the

researcher. This chapter presents the findings of the data collection process and describes the lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city schools implementing mandates outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Findings

This chapter will further present the findings of the data collection process. The interview and data analysis process prompted the emergence of seven major themes and three minor themes from the four research questions.

Question One

The first guided question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city schools who are faced with accountability provisions in accordance with the framework of educational governance of NCLB? Two major themes emerged as the five principals provided data as it pertained to their lived experiences. The following themes described the lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city schools: An overwhelming sense of responsibility to address social issues as a priority before having the ability to focus on student achievement; and, feelings of ineptness and inequitable treatment.

Responsibility to Address Social Issues

Major theme one was the overwhelming sense of responsibility to address social issues as a major priority before having the ability to focus on student achievement. Four of the principals interviewed revealed that their experiences were no different from principals in other settings; however, the magnitude of the social issues facing them

becomes overwhelming. The following statements from each of the participants provide evidence as it pertains to this theme.

ICSP-1, a 45 year old Black female with a doctoral degree, stated that social issues are innumerable in the inner city school. The participant stated:

True we all have a vision and mission and they are probably the same no matter what school you go to. It's all of the other things that I deal with, even outside of the classroom, such as are the children coming to school, are they safe, do they have a safe environment at home. All of those other things that impact their schooling because if they are not safe, if they are being abused, if they do not have food at home, then they certainly can not come to school and be expected to work or achieve at the highest level because they have other issues that are there and as a principal at an inner city school, those things impact the achievement of the student. They impact me as an instructional leader. I have to think about if they have pencils at home. If we are sending work home, do they have a table or electricity to complete their homework? Do they have food on the table at home or was their only meal or last meal of the day what they received at the school cafeteria at lunch?

ICSP-2, a 49 year old White female with a Specialist degree in Educational Leadership and seven years as a principal, shared, "I deal with students with a tremendous number of deficits because they are crack babies or they are abused or whatever and I have such a high percentage that goes through the child study referral

process. I have [social] agencies on campus. None of the high risk factors of poor families is addressed in this [school] system.”

ICSP-3, a middle-aged Hispanic male with an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership and five years of experience as a principal, provided a similar response, “You don’t have kids [in other settings] or a great number of children that need your nurturing because they are getting that from their parents.” The principal further added that, “There are kids who come to school hungry or kids who may have been awake all night because somebody was beating their mother or anything like that.”

ICSP-5, a 43 year old Black male with a Master’s degree and six years of experience as a principal, further noted: “We have been given the responsibility of raising children at the school site. We have made the school site the number one alternative to raising children and that is unfair.”

Four of the five principals described the social issues and the importance of addressing them before teaching and learning can begin. They each expressed feeling responsible for meeting the social needs of their students and NCLB mandates become impossible to comply with if these issues are not dealt with.

Ineptness and Inequity

Major theme two was participants’ feelings of ineptness and inequitable treatment due to the lack of focus on socioeconomics and four of the five principals interviewed expressed these feelings. The principals revealed that the implementation of NCLB and the state’s current grading system does not provide flexibility nor does it take into

account that the there variables for which principals can not control. During the interview ICSP-1 explained:

I do not like, as an inner city school, I do not think it is fair to grade all students and all schools on the same thing, because what we did to accomplish that grade is totally different than what you would do at another school. I am sure that at a *Pinecrest* school they are not inundated with the test preparation that we are. I think it is unfair.

ICSP-3 explained that the legislature should look at the economic structure and look at certain dynamics and the demographics of a city or area. As it pertains to inequitable treatment of principals in the difference settings, ICSP-5 stated that it is unfair to place specific responsibilities on principals, primarily those faced by inner city school principals.

ICSP-3 had a similar response which clarified specific responsibilities of inner city school principals. He stated:

I wish they would give us [inner city school principals] a handicap, you know, if you have a 96 percent free and reduced lunch, you will get this many points towards your evaluation or school grade. Give me a handicap on how many single moms I have. Give me a handicap on how many kids are ready for school.

Speaking with extreme passion and great intensity, ICSP-3 further added, “They have to look at other things such as socioeconomics and mobility rates.”

ICSP-2 described feelings of ineptness and inequitable treatment due to the lack of focus on socioeconomics during the interview by reflecting on all of her experiences and comparing her experiences in other setting. She explained that she was treated much differently and her abilities were not questioned nor did she have to fight as hard to obtain resources or support while working in a suburban, high performing setting. Everything was in great abundance and the teachers and students in that setting had the best of everything. Her feelings were expressed with strong convictions and much passion. She responded that what she is currently experiencing did not and would never have occurred in a suburban setting. She explained:

I have worked at all types of schools, I have worked in high socioeconomic middle schools, high poverty elementary and middle schools and working class high schools. Typical of inner city schools is a lack of facilities. I fought for three years to get two buildings removed from the campus for health and safety issues and I have had problems with bus transportation, inadequate facilities, less quality teachers, less funding, higher minority and higher poverty are all qualities of an inner city school.

ICSP-2 further bolstered this theme by stating, “I look at where we bring kids from where they started and the majority of my kids, based on the data, have no oral language ability when they walk in the door as four or five year olds.” She further explained:

Some key factors are not counted in NCLB grading. The research shows that across the board that the “A” line and that the “F” line goes right along socioeconomic lines. It is one-on-one ratio and that is not fair. It is culturally biased. It is socioeconomically biased. I think that is a better way to put it.

During the interview with ICSP-3, feelings of ineptness was clearly expressed when he stated, “We could sit here and make one hundred excuses, but at the end of the day it is my job to perform at a level that will benefit these kids for their life. I sit in my office and I wonder, in my heart, did I do enough? Did the teachers do enough”?

The participants reflected on their experiences in other settings and/or associated their current assignments to their colleagues in other settings. They have shared feelings of ineptness by describing how their abilities are often connected to the schools, families, communities in which they are assigned. They have shared examples of inequality due to the challenges that hinder their abilities to meet NCLB mandates. They expressed challenges and barriers that are often overlooked or discounted in relation to the inner city school setting.

Question Two

Two major themes and one minor theme emerged from the second guided research question: What types of challenges do inner city elementary school principals encounter as they attempt to fulfill the requirements of NCLB? During the interviews when participants elaborated on NCLB, school grading and their experiences as an inner city school principal, two major themes emerged. All five of the principals revealed

experiencing extreme pressure, stress and burnout, and experiencing feelings of having to deal with unrealistic expectations due to a lack of support and resources. Emergence of a minor theme manifested when three of the participants revealed concerns that impeded their ability to be more visible and ensure availability of themselves to all stakeholders.

Extreme Pressure, Stress, and Burnout

Notably, during the interview process two of the five principals independently expressed that they were considering a request for a temporary leave of absence and cited stress, pressure and burnout related to their current assignment in inner city schools. The principals expressed that they have experienced extremely high levels of stress working in the inner city school setting. For example, ICSP-5 stated:

Probably if you were to get a group of inner city principals together for an informal [no district or state] meeting in a room and you get a group of suburban principals with the same setting in a room and have open conversations for two to three hours, you will see a tremendous difference in the attitudes, in the stress levels, in the mentality and the mind set of the inner city principals than the principals in the suburbs.

ICSP-2 indicated:

The pressure is tremendous, we have tremendous amount of reports, reports, reports to show the accountability. I have tremendous pressure on me to prove that I have an adequate, successful school much more so than some of the higher socioeconomic schools. Pressure, pressure, pressure increasing.

Emergence of this theme was further strengthened when ICSP-1 shared “I think that the amount of pressure that there is and that sick feeling that you get waiting for that grade to come out and you are just looking for it to be a C or a D or God forbid you get an A and then you are looked upon as cheating to make the grade.” ICSP-4, a middle-aged Black female, with an earned Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration and Supervision and eight years of experience as a principal, created a scenario in effort to describe the stress and pressure related to the position. Describing the principalship in an inner city school and recalling her experience in other settings, ICSP-4 stated:

You rarely have the problem [in high SES schools] where you have to build up the child’s self-esteem. Of course, you are not going to put them down, but you don’t have the fights, the disruption in your school day and maybe you will have parents come in because they got mad at you for something, but in other settings, you rarely have this kind of stress. You don’t have a kid push around a teacher. You don’t have kids or a great number of children that need nurturing because they are getting that from their parents.

ICSP-3 expressed the importance of understanding the pressure of working in inner city schools. ICSP-3 stated, “I just want to make sure that you understand that I feel a great responsibility as an inner city school principal to the students.”

Responses from participants are aligned with the literature. All of the principals refer to stress and pressure all related to school grading and meeting standards. Two of

the principals revealed feelings of burnout and hinted about returning to the classroom. In two separate interviews, both participants expressed that they were weighing the option of career re-direction because the stress is impacting their health.

Unrealistic Expectations and Lack of Support and Resources

All participants expressed feelings of having to deal with unrealistic expectations due to a lack of support and resources. Questions related to the interview protocol required the principals to discuss their duties, responsibilities, and the implementation of meeting NCLB requirements. All of the participants were clear as to what is required to meet federal and state standards. The second major theme emerged when four of the five inner city school principals discussed concerns with the lack of support and resources necessary to address the expectations.

ICSP-2 conveyed with great frustration that the expectations that are attached to NCLB mandates are “ridiculous” because there is little or no support and resources provided. She stated, “I am constantly dealing with the school’s reputation. I am constantly trying to find resources and change resources, and, and shift things around to make it work. The district, for example, gives me a rule-a mandatory rule, which doesn’t jive with other rules, which doesn’t jive with other rules and I have to figure out a way to make everybody happy and be in compliance.” ICSP-2’s feelings of extreme frustration were clear as she continued, stating:

I’m aggressive in seeking outside resources because my resources are increasingly limited by the State and the Feds. I am in one of those schools where they keep

taking money and taking money and it is already poor. So, I am very aggressive in seeking out- I wrote eleven grants this year and I have more than 20 partnerships just to keep the school afloat, where middle and upper class schools do not have to do that.

ICSP-1 expressed that the expectations are different and unrealistic. She further explained that the expectations are unrealistic because students come to school at different levels. Students in the inner city school setting usually enter school below grade level, while high SES students tend to come to school on level. As ICSP-1 stated:

The parents [of children in higher SES schools] take responsibility or are involved in their child's education, that is totally different from one in which the child is dropped off, that has never had any schooling, no one has ever really talked to them, they come to school without knowing letters, sounds, or how to sit in a seat. I think what we [inner city school principals] are expected to do is to teach what should have been taught at home and then bring them up to grade level so that even though we are starting behind, we are expected to do all of that, then bring them all the way up to grade level so that they are able to meet the standards.

With less enthusiasm but with equal passion, ICSP-4 articulated, "It is hard to be an administrator if you are not getting the support that you need because you are not finding your value, you are not finding your worth." ICSP-5 explained that inner city school principals are expected to, "raise children at the school site."

The participants described different views and examples of unrealistic expectations. Additionally, each principal described the limited resources needed to ensure that NCLB mandates are met. Participants provided examples of the resources needed, such as additional funding for tutorial programs or on campus social agencies to address student and family needs. One principal indicated that by simply having a full time social worker and nurse on site would enable her to focus more on her role as an instructional leader instead of seeking resources to help with issues that inhibit student achievement.

Impediments to Visibility and Accessibility

Minor theme one manifested when three of the principals frequently referred to the excessive number of off campus meetings that inhibit their ability to be more visible throughout their buildings. The principals expressed concerns with not being as visible and available as they would like to be. ICSP-4 stated that she believes the success of every inner city school principal is contingent upon visibility and accessibility. She further explained that in order to be effective, to build relationships with the students, parents, and teachers, you must be in the building as much as possible. ICSP-4 indicated that she becomes aggravated when she is called away from the building to attend meetings in the middle of the day. She described how she has to work late or take work home in an effort to avoid sitting in her office and playing catch up with paperwork due to being out of the building so frequently.

When discussing availability and accessibility, ICSP-5 explained, “In particular, in the inner city, thinking that you are going to sit behind a desk and that you are just going to write a plan and that you are not going to get dirty, well you need to know that you are going to get down and dirty everyday and that you are going to work.” ICSP-3 noted: “When you go into the inner city school the issue was more of getting the parents to come in to get involved and a lot of time they are not feeling comfortable. I think that one of my jobs is to make sure that the parents in the inner city school have confidence to speak to me, to walk into my office, to say that my office is open, come and talk. When I am around, I’m always out talking to them.”

With strong conviction, ICSP-4 stated, “In an inner city school, you don’t have the luxury of really sitting and thinking through during the school day because you have to be on your feet. You have to see what is going on. You have to be visible. It is a whole different world.” ICSP-4 further stated:

As an administrator there is all this stuff that we have to do, that is not important to me like going to a meeting in the middle of the day. Oh no, I have got to be at my school. So they need to cut that out because in inner city schools, we need to be there. You need to touch basis with the teachers and everyone. If there has to be a meeting, let it start at one o’clock, but during those core teaching times, no administrator should be pulled out of their building because that is the most critical and even though (silence) I don’t know, the directors and superintendent and everyone else, feels that whatever it is that they are talking about is the most

important thing, but it is not. The most important thing is all because of children. Anything that interferes with an administrator working with children is not important. It can wait.

All three principals agree that in order to be effective, visibility and accessibility is vital. Although the principals did not specify or define the amount of time necessary for visibility and accessibility, all of them explained that sitting in the office or being off campus implies ineffective leadership. During the interviews each principal stated that they were concerned with the number of district scheduled meetings and professional development activities that frequently take them out of the building. Consequently, each principal expressed concerns with not being as visible and available as they would like to be due to the excessive and untimely meetings.

Question Three

The third guided research question was: Do principals assigned to inner city schools perceive their preparedness for the principalship as adequate? During data analysis one major theme emerged: Preparedness for the inner city school principalship was generic or nonexistent. In addition, two minor themes emerged: Preparation to fulfill duties and responsibilities of the inner city school principalship was acquired in non-administrative roles; and, perspectives about how principals should be prepared for the principalship.

Minimal and Generic Coursework

Data analysis from four of the five principals yielded the first major theme which suggested that preparedness for the inner city school principalship was generic or nonexistent. Participants' descriptions of their preparedness for their positions as an inner city elementary school principal was presented as generic, nonexistent, and all participants indicated that preparedness as it pertains to working in an inner city school as something that is never really addressed. They all reported receiving little or no formal training in order to deal with the challenges in the inner city school. As ICSP-3 responded, "I wasn't even close to being ready. It has been an *up hill* all the way through. I had no concept of it."

Comparable comments were expressed by ICSP-2. She mulled over her administrative and supervision training and briefly described her coursework and administrative training. After reflecting, ICSP-2 stated, "I think there are basic training topics. I know that these topics need to be covered by all principals. For example, how to handle a budget, how to handle personnel protocol, how to manage an office, how to manage a staff, overseeing and organizing staff development or how to manage money, etc. I think that those are generic and can be taught to anybody." ICSP-2 verbalized that preparedness for overseeing an inner city school is insufficient. The participant's account of her educational leadership training indicated that there was little or no emphasis placed on preparing administrators for what they will encounter irrespective of the various settings: suburban, rural, or schools with high or low socio-economic status.

ICSP-4 further bolstered this theme when she stated, “Oh, there was preparedness for basic task when you go to the leadership classes or whatever and I understand this, they are talking about the whole child. They are not talking about the kids who come to school hungry or kids who may have been awake all night because somebody was beating their mother or anything like that. They are not addressing that.”

ICSP-5 had a similar response, “No one has ever said anything to me, but here are the keys and this is your staff. The few workshops that I have attended regarding the principalship are all fluff. It is not grassroots, realistic events that you at the inner city school are going to have to deal with and they paint this picture that is not real.”

Interviewees conveyed that preparedness for working in an inner city school is lacking. Some felt that course work, in-services, and administrative professional development activities offer little or no information as to how to address inner city school barriers that hinder student achievement.

Informal Preparation

A minor theme of inner city elementary school principal preparation to emerge was that preparation to fulfill duties and responsibilities of the inner city school principalship was acquired in non-administrative roles. Two of the five principals indicated that their preparedness for their assignment to the inner city school occurred while working in other capacities of the education field. ICSP-5 stated, “What prepared me to be, I guess an effective administrator, would be that I was a former athlete and former coach [in an inner city school]. That prepared me with respect to preparations,

being organized, knowing your personnel, who is strong and who is weak and putting them in the best possible positions that they can help kids and basically having common sense.” ICSP-1 provided a similar response, “By teaching in an inner city school at the beginning of my career, working as reading specialist in an inner city school and working as a reading supervisor for Title I, has prepared me for this. Because of this, I am very well prepared for it.” Overall, the participants credit their knowledge of managing an inner city school to working in other positions in inner city schools (teacher, coach, and curriculum specialist) prior to becoming a school administrator.

Preparedness Recommendations

A second minor theme emerged when participants described perspectives about how principals should be prepared for the principalship. Three of the five principals believed that preparedness should include experiencing all settings. Experiencing other setting should take place as an assistant principal or any other administrator role prior to becoming a principal.

ICSP-3 indicated that training in other settings, such as suburban, rural, or schools with high or low socio-economic status would be helpful. He conveyed that the training should be formal and extensive. ICSP-3 further explained that prior to becoming a principal, the district requires all assistant principals to complete two internships. The internship usually takes place for four to six weeks in the summer with little or no consideration for varying the summer assignment. ICSP-2 described her frustration with only being assigned to inner city schools. She believed this occurred because her non-

administrative positions were all held in inner city schools and there is no “out.” She stated:

I have worked [inner city] elementary, middle and high school and I think that they [principals] should be exposed to elementary, middle, and high school levels because I think they are very different, but I also think that they should be exposed to different socioeconomic grouping. I think that it should be a part of their hands-on experience. I think that is a critical in terms of filtering them out and in terms of what the best placement is for this person’s skills and their personality. Principals need experience in their practicum somehow in different types of settings such as: rich, middle, working class, and poverty levels before they go into an inner city school.

ICSP-1 referred to her past experience as a teacher, reading specialist, and a former assignment as an educational specialist with the district’s Title I administration office. She expressed that her experience with inner city schools have hindered consideration for an assignment as a principal in other settings. The participant explained that she has always worked in inner city schools and many of her colleagues have no inkling about the inner city school principalship. As it pertains to preparedness recommendations, ICSP-1 stated, “I think that all of the assessments or whatever hoops you go through should be the same for all. What I don’t think should happen is that some people have the opportunity to work at one setting throughout their career. I think there should be change, we should all have the opportunity to work in all types of schools.”

According to participants, assigning a principal to an inner city school can not be an afterthought. It must be made clear to all aspiring principals that experience at all levels is crucial. The participants further remarked that there should be emphasis on training or internship programs that provide exposure to the challenges and barriers of welfare- dependent families and communities, all of which strongly impact the principals' role. Prior to an inner city school assignment, district leaders must ensure that all potential candidates understand the culture of the inner city. They hinted that districts should establish a comprehensive training program for principals with emphasis on the amount of time spent in the inner city school setting.

Question Four

The fourth and final guided research question for this study was: What perceived impacts have the accountability provisions had on connecting school performance to elementary principals' annual evaluation? Two major themes emerged: Participants perceived that items delineated in the current evaluation system are generic and subjective with little or no correlation to the daily duties and responsibilities of principals assigned to inner city schools; and, NCLB and school grading outweigh the annual evaluation process.

Generic and Subjective Evaluation System

Each of the five participants utilized and carefully scrutinized each of the performance objectives before answering questions presented as it pertains to the performance appraisal. All of the participants were from the same school district and

referred to the district's current appraisal system for evaluating all school site principals, including assistant principals. According to interviewees, items delineated in their current performance evaluation system are generic and subjective with little or no correlation to the daily duties and responsibilities of principals assigned to inner city schools. All participants expressed great concerns with the current system referring to it as generic and subjective.

With specific reference to the district's current appraisal system, ICSP-2 explained:

One size shoe does not fit all. I want to be clear on this. I think we do need accountability, but this is accountability gone amuck. They just kind of grabbed a system and made it fit without much thought. There has to be weight for certain situations, whether you are rural or an inner city school or a middle class school. My experience in this county is that the assessment system is politically motivated, dictated and extremely subjective. I do not see a collaborative model.

ICSP-3 noted, "My own opinion about this performance appraisal, in general, is that it does not show what we do on a daily basis. This is a piece of paper that doesn't say anything."

ICSP-4 spent a great deal of time reviewing the principal competencies of the district's appraisal system before offering a response. She stated:

While I am reviewing this very quickly, a lot of the competencies, you know, most of the principals hit on, but I think taking this a step further is in inner city

schools where all of the hardships that the children bring with them—(pause). As an administrator you have to show them the importance of themselves, like looking at a new and innovative way of reaching that child, maybe he has on dirty clothes, maybe he has on raggedy shoes, maybe he can't sit with someone else, but we have to be able to reach them and teach them, and that's not addressed in our evaluation.”

ICSP-5 did not review the appraisal citing that he was very familiar with the document. He referred to it as a “joke.” He further noted that the appraisal system is used to evaluate all principals regardless of the setting or barriers and that all schools can not be run in the same manner. He explained that what one principal has to do to ensure student achievement may be totally different from another. He further stated:

You have different schools with different student bodies, different financial needs and so given that particular status of things how can you say that each principal should be measured by the same means, by the same rules when you go into schools and they are different? One school may have a large population of parents that are involved and another school may not. Another school may have the financial means based upon their PTA to provide them with extra incentives and things of this nature, so you can't have an evaluation tool that is very basic to all principals because it is not the same.

ICSP-4 summed up his personal view of the district's evaluation system when he expressed concerns with rating inner city school principals and principals from other

settings utilizing one system. He indicated that the system does not allow principals to highlight their true accomplishments nor does it enable principals to convey what it “really takes to improve student achievement in the inner city school.”

ICSP-1 looked at the document and express similar concerns with the district’s principal evaluation system. She explained that the current instrument is very detailed. She clarified that some of 19 competencies and technical skills are unrealistic to meet and some should be changed and adapted to what actually takes place in the school. She stated:

For example, when I look at competency number three, where *the school site administrator exhibits commitment to the vision and mission of the school* and it talks about establishing a vision and a mission. True we all have a vision and a mission and they are probably the same no matter what school you go to, but I think there are some other things that I do at this school that should be rated as opposed to whether or not I have a clear vision and mission statement. All of the other things that I deal with, even outside of the classroom, such as are the children coming to school, are they safe, do they have a safe environment at home. All of the other things that impact their schooling because if they are not safe, if they are abused, if they do not have food at home, then they certainly can not come to school and be expected to work or achieve at the highest level because they have other issues that are and as a principal at an inner city school

those things impact the achievement of the students. Maybe if I was at another type of school, I could focus on the vision and mission.

Preponderance of School Grading

NCLB and school grading outweigh the annual evaluation process emerged as a theme when four of the five principals expressed that district and state officials often tie school performance to the school's leadership. It was expressed by three interviewees that the performance appraisal is often a formality and their level of effectiveness is discussed and revealed upon receiving the school's letter grade. ICSP-5 stated, "Well, unfortunately, we are all measured by the school grading system so that would have to be the measuring stick that the district and the state apply to us as administrators."

This theme was further bolstered when ICSP-1 added:

I think that basically they should evaluate you on your job as a principal. I believe the question is, do all of the schools that have, lets say 50 percent or less of the students qualifying for free and reduced priced lunch, do they all get high evaluations, or is it just me that is being evaluated based on the grade of my school?

Comparable comments emerged from other participants. ICSP-4 described feelings related to having all stakeholders tie the performance of the principal to the school's overall performance grade. She referred to parents as well as district and state officials. She stated, "Only that grade is looked at, which is unfortunate because that is the only thing that the parents look at too. The parents don't see that we made a lot of

growth.” She further stated, “They all really need to look at the growth and the school grade should be secondary to that.”

ICSP-2 responded with great passion. She explained that she has only been with the district for four years. “I’m coming from another county where the system was designed to set goals that would be strictly tied mathematically to our schools with consideration for the poverty level and you needed to hit it mathematically or you didn’t.” She further explained:

I think that principals should be accountable based on a fair computation for everyone that takes into account socioeconomics, culture, unique demands of that school. I think an accountability computation should be very specific with consideration for unique circumstances and I do not think that our system does that. I think that there are some “A” schools that do not have “A” principals. They just happen to be plopped in an “A” school and I think that there are some wonderful “F” school principals that are really extraordinary and very successful and they happen to be plopped in an “F” school. I hesitate to use the current school grading procedure to evaluate anybody—a principal, assistant principal or teachers.

Each participant expressed concerns that there is an inevitable nexus to the performance of principals and the schools’ annual grade. The principals expressed feelings of being judged by the results of the state’s grading system. Participants communicated that there is much trepidation prior to annual evaluation meetings and the

release of school grades. Moreover, they expressed concerns about the evaluation indicators and labeled them generic in nature and it is utilized for all principals, regardless of the setting. Participants indicated that the evaluation document provides no flexibility or consideration for barriers that hinder school and student achievement.

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV described the principals' perspectives on the implementation of NCLB, school grading, and the impact it has on how inner city elementary school principals are evaluated. There were four guided research questions that lead to the emergence of major and minor themes. These themes described the lived experiences of the participants faced with meeting goals outlined in NCLB and avoiding negative consequences. Each participant shared perceptions as pertaining to the implementation of guidelines outlined in NCLB and the accountability provisions. Two major themes emerged from guided question one. The themes were (1) an overwhelming sense of responsibility to address social issues as a priority before having the ability to focus on student achievement, and (2) feelings of ineptness and inequitable treatment.

The second guided research question sought to elicit responses related to the challenges of being assigned to an inner city school while attempting to fulfill the requirements of NCLB. Participants' responses yielded the emergence of two major themes and one minor theme. The two major themes were: (1) extreme pressure, stress and burnout, and (2) and feelings of having to deal with unrealistic expectations due to a lack of support and resources. The minor theme was: daily tasks, emergencies and

meetings that inhibit inner city elementary school principals' ability to be more visible and ensure availability to all stakeholders.

One major theme and two minor themes described the third guided research question, which placed emphasis on the preparedness for inner city school principalship. Major theme one revealed that the participants believed that their preparedness was generic or nonexistent. The two minor themes were: (1) preparation to fulfill duties and responsibilities of the inner city school principalship was acquired in non-administrative roles, and (2) perspectives about how principals should be prepared for the principalship.

Guided research question four sought participants' perceptions of the impact on elementary school principals' annual performance evaluation and the connection of the school's performance and letter grading. The two emergent themes were: (1) items delineated in the current evaluation system are generic and subjective with little or no correlation to the daily duties and responsibilities of principals assigned to inner city schools, and (2) NCLB and school grading outweigh the annual evaluation process. The lived experiences of inner city school principals undertaking the task of implementing and meeting the guidelines of NCLB included their perspectives about their duties and responsibilities, school grading, and the connection to the current performance appraisal system.

Statements and expressions from participants in this study reflected what was described as an overall agreement for accountability and a need to reconstruct the overall accountability system. Participants provided insight into the restructuring of the current

principal training programs and the establishment of a more comprehensive appraisal system. The principals' expressed a strong commitment and great passion for ensuring that student achievement is a priority. Although they each expressed that accountability is necessary, they are concerned that the accountability formula excludes barriers related to students' inability to make academic progress as outlined in NCLB. The five inner city elementary school principals clearly articulated the barriers and challenges associated with their schools and the difficulty in implementing NCLB mandates; however, they imparted that they accept their obligation to ensure academic success in their schools.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Factors associated with the inner city have a destructive impact on inner city schools and the role of the inner city school principal. Factors such as extreme poverty, violence, adult/parent illiteracy, lack of parent involvement, discipline problems, disproportionate number of students with disabilities and emotional issues, and often dilapidated facilities with archaic materials. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates have forced states and school districts to define a level of performance proficiency and ensure that 95% of the students in every subgroup reach this level (Matthews, 2004). The aim of NCLB is to close the achievement gap between minorities and non-minorities. The subgroups are identified as economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, limited English proficient student, migrants, and minorities. Inner city schools are characterized by a significant number of students from the targeted subgroups. The pressure and penalties of NCLB have placed insurmountable pressure on inner city school principals. Non-compliance is tied to negative performance appraisals, demotions, reassignments, or termination.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to provide insight for direction of future educational reform initiatives that impact inner city schools and inner city school principals. The course of future educational reform initiatives should include strong emphasis on improving preparedness for inner city school principals and, most

importantly, how inner city school principals are evaluated. Furthermore, the intent of this study was to highlight the role of the inner city school principal and to discover what the participants perceived as the impact of NCLB and school grading on their position as an inner city school principal and on how their performance is evaluated. In terms of performance and accountability, the principals participating in this study described and corroborated similar findings proposed by Goertz & Duffy (2001). Through their research, it was determined that performance goals for principals were obscure and there were no formal or consistent consequences. In addition, to further bolster the goal of the study, the inner city school principals participating in this study shared lived experiences that provided a strong argument for transforming the current appraisal and accountability system for inner city elementary school principals. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) and self-efficacy provided the theoretical framework. To that end, this dissertation has been written from a hermeneutical/social constructivist phenomenological approach.

The sample for this study consisted of five inner city elementary school principals with five or more years of experience. The principals were interviewed and their statements were coded and grouped according to their similarities. Data analysis led to the emergence of seven major themes and three minor themes which described the results of this study.

The background of the problem, a review of the literature, the methodology, procedures used to conduct the study, and the findings of the study were all presented in Chapters I through IV. This chapter includes an overview of the study, a discussion of the

findings, conclusions, limitations of the study, implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the perceptions and experiences of principals who are assigned to inner city elementary schools in one of the largest urban school districts in the nation. Emphasis was placed on their perceptions and experiences of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in relation to their roles as principals assigned to these schools. The researcher's goal was to describe the inner city elementary school principals' views of accountability for administrators and their responsibilities for school improvement, student achievement, and the state's system of grading schools as outlined by the state and NCLB.

Significance of the Study

Since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, emphasis has been placed on school reform and accountability. The establishment of the accountability and assessment timeline incorporates sanctions and incentives which ultimately place greater demands on principals to produce and ensure results of improving student achievement as outlined by each state and the federal government. There is an informal hierarchy of accountability with the greatest impact on school level administrators. Borba (2003) pointed out that accountability expectations are high and principals are on the frontline of implementing mandates and educational change.

Hess, Keller, and Friedman (2003) described the new federal accountability system as a coercive or suggestive system. Coercive accountability refers to sanctions or threats of termination for school principals. Conversely, suggestive accountability implies providing additional resources, professional development and assistance with improving student achievement.

Principals are held most accountable and they are most at risk for consequences attached to accountability systems primarily the utilization of coercive accountability. Consequences such as a low performance evaluation, demotion, reassignment or termination define the impact of NCLB on principals. The federal mandate requires states to establish guidelines for a level of performance proficiency, and schools are accountable for ensuring that 95% of the students in every subgroup reach this level (Matthews, 2004). The primary focus of NCLB is to address specific subgroups: economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and minority students (Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002). Ironically, principals assigned to inner city schools have a substantial number of students in each or all targeted subgroups.

Although all principals are impacted by NCLB mandates and accountability provisions, inner city school principals are faced with innumerable challenges. They are under tremendous pressure to ensure the attainment of higher tests scores and that the overall performance of the school is successful. Greater accountability causes school

leaders to experience a great deal of anguish and distress due to unintended consequences (Jerald, 2003).

Kimball and Sirotnik (2000) shared a general list of challenges that urban school principals face. Their list includes homelessness, extreme poverty, single-family homes, inadequate childcare, drug and alcohol abuse, gang affiliation, new immigrants, and child abuse and neglect. Moreover, many students are not only being raised in single-family homes, but a growing number of students in urban schools are being raised by grandparents or great-grandparents. Absenteeism, disruptive behavior, high mobility, and a lack of parental/guardian involvement are added concerns of inner city school principals (Bowers, 2000).

This study provides insight into how NCLB has impacted the role of the inner city school principal. It enabled inner city school principals to share their experiences and challenges as they strive to meet the requirements of the mandate. Principals were afforded an opportunity to describe how they must react to the federal accountability system and avoid the consequences that will directly impact their career. After an extensive search, the researcher was unable to locate published peer-reviewed literature that focused on NCLB and the impact on inner city school principals as it relates to school grading, performance evaluations, and principal preparedness.

This research provides significant data that relates to the perceptions of inner city elementary school principals concerning the challenges that hinder their ability to comply with state and federal mandates. The focus provides rich descriptions about the

challenges as well as the consequences due to compliance or noncompliance and implementation of the current accountability system. The rich thick descriptions provide relevant information to lawmakers and educational leaders in effort to address the point of accountability. It paints a vivid portrait of the impact and how inner city school principals make educational and non-educational decisions in an effort to improve student achievement and raise the school's grade.

The researcher found literature that speaks in isolation to NCLB, accountability, inner city schools and host of literature about inner city school principals. Additionally, there is literature that focuses on school grading. However, there is not a large body of research dedicated to understanding what inner city school principals endure during times of increased emphasis on high-stakes tests, school grading and whether their performance will provide the nexus for evaluating their effectiveness as a principal. This research intended to provide insight to federal and state policymakers and contribute to future educational reform aimed at improving high-stakes accountability systems. It will further assist in the development of improving support to inner city school principals faced with numerous challenges that hinder student achievement.

Method

In an effort to explore the phenomenon of being a principal assigned to an inner city elementary school implementing the mandates outlined in NCLB, the researcher determined that a qualitative study is appropriate. The researcher utilized the constructivist paradigm also referred to as hermeneutical and dialectical (Denzin &

Lincoln, 1998). The rationale for a phenomenological study stemmed from the researcher's aim to highlight the lived experiences of inner city elementary school principals as they relate to the challenges of implementing NCLB.

Several steps were taken to address bias. The researcher's role was one of questioner and recorder of information. Further, the researcher served as bricoleur. In addition to utilizing the process of epoche, as recommended by Creswell (1998), two measures were utilized to minimize the researcher's biases—member check and journaling. The researcher bracketed all personal preconceived ideas about the phenomenon. All transcribed interviews were shared with the participants and corrections were made accordingly. Rich, thick description was utilized to further avoid bias. The researcher documented personal thoughts and beliefs about the experiences of the participants.

A criterion sample of five principals assigned to inner city elementary schools within a large urban school district geographically located in the southeastern part of the United States participated in the study. The selection was based on principals assigned for a minimum of three to five years to inner city elementary schools with 90% or more of its students living in poverty as outlined by the federal free and reduced lunch program guidelines and a letter grade of C, D, or F. The researcher's interview protocol consisted of semi-structured open-ended questions with emphasis on the utilization of probes.

Data has been stored and secured as required by the Institutional Review Board. In an effort to address ethical issues, a written agreement in the form of an Informed

Consent served as full disclosure as to the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were informed that the risks of involvement were minimal, which included divulging personal and confidential discussions. The implementation of member checks and pseudo-names ensured confidentiality. Internal and external validity was addressed by utilizing a reflexive journal, member checks, peer review, rich, thick descriptions, and the application of code-recoding.

Data analysis was conducted by using the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method as described by Moustakas (1994) for data analysis. This method required the researcher to engage in self-reflection or epoche. Following the process of epoche, horizontalization was applied in order to extract all relevant statements. In order to describe the essence of the experience, the statements were clustered into themes, creating textural descriptions of the experience, including verbatim illustrations.

Limitations

Limitations of the study were primarily due to the sample size of five principals assigned to inner city elementary schools. This small sample is to be considered a limitation to generalizability. Findings may not be generalizable to elementary schools in other settings, other school districts, or secondary school principals. In an effort to identify potential inner city elementary school principals, the researcher reviewed specific data: free and reduced lunch school percentages, school grading reports, and principals' tenure. Although the small sample is considered a limitation to generalizability, findings may be transferable to other settings. Due to the utilization of

texturally rich description, readers and other researchers will have a level of transferability as it pertains to the research. Most importantly, the researcher is currently a principal assigned to one of the districts inner city schools; therefore, researcher bias may be perceived as a limitation.

Discussion

The statements garnered in this study are aligned with the literature review. Interviewees assisted in ascertaining pertinent information regarding the perceived impact of No Child Left Behind on inner city school principals. There were four guiding research questions. The emergence of seven major and three minor themes are illustrated in tables in an effort to provide a visual understanding of the common statements.

NCLB Accountability Provisions and Inner City School Principals

As it pertains to the first guided question, NCLB accountability provisions and inner city school principals, several phrases and statements were grouped and categorized yielding two major themes: responsibility to address social issues, and ineptness and inequity. Table 5.1 illustrates this information.

Responsibility to Address Social Issues

The principals revealed that it is impossible to implement educational initiatives in an effort to meet NCLB mandates without addressing the social issues that hinder student achievement. They expressed that the inner city is plagued with social issues. These innumerable social issues tend to sabotage programs and proposed plans intended

to address student deficiencies. Specifically, the principals believed that social issues must be addressed in order to ensure that the students are equipped to learn.

Prince and Howard (2002) studied children in poverty based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. They found that it is intuitive for children of poverty to focus on survival and the attainment of basic needs. Moreover, impoverished students tend to be preoccupied with their physiological needs, even while in school. The researchers further explained that physiological needs will dominate education. The participants are conscious of Maslow's theory and acknowledge the need to address social issues.

Interviewee responses resonate with Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez (2000), who found that inner city school principals must organize and oversee social services that directly impact student achievement. The researchers further add that inner city schools must be attentive to social issues if they wish to ensure educational success. These findings are consistent with the with the research of Portin (2000), who found that inner city school principals are often concerned with addressing the educational needs of children who must deal with communal issues such as drugs, violence, and other issues related to feelings of hopelessness. The literature indicated that addressing these issues will benefit the inner city principals' ultimate goal of ensuring student achievement.

Ineptness and Inequity

Ineptness and inequities emerged as a theme from the participants' phrases and statements (See Table 5.1). Interviewees described feelings of ineptness and inequity and

further explained that their job performance is often associated with the school and the community for which they are assigned. Participants remarked that high SES and high performing schools have an advantage when school and performance recognition incentives are allocated prompting the belief that their efforts are fruitless. Findings indicated by participants are congruent with the literature. Dandridge, Edwards, and Pleasants (2000) described inner city school principals as targets. They further explained that they are charged with educating inner city students who are inundated with factors that guarantee academic failure. Additionally, their expressed feelings of inequity is consistent with the research of Wong and Shen (2003), who asserted that the constraints in high poverty schools are magnified and inner city school principals encounter far greater challenges than principals assigned to middle and upper class schools and neighborhoods.

The principals in this study expressed that their efforts are often not recognized and subordinates have little to no understanding of what they do above and beyond to ensure that students are given every opportunity to learn. They further expressed feelings of ineptness when they described that the challenges facing inner city schools are not identified or addressed. This is further reinforced when participants explained that social issues are not addressed when looking at principal effectiveness.

Table 5.1

NCLB Accountability Provisions and Inner City School Principals

Responsibility to Address Social Issues*	Ineptness and Inequitable Treatment*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other things that impact schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfair to grade all schools on the same thing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Concerned if children are in a safe environment at home</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequitable treatment of principals in the different settings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Concerned if children are abused</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfair to place specific responsibilities on principals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that students have supplies for school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical of inner city schools is a lack of facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Concerned about kids coming to school hungry</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCLB grading is not fair and it is socioeconomically biased.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with tremendous number of deficit-crack babies and abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Did I do enough?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kids who come to school hungry</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kids who have been awake all night because somebody was beating their mother</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsibility of raising children at the school site 	

*Words, statements, phrases according to interviewees' responses.

Note. Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Challenges Encountered in Fulfilling NCLB Requirements

What types of challenges do inner city school principals encounter as they attempt to fulfill the requirements of NCLB? Two major themes and one minor theme emerged from the second guided research question: feelings of extreme pressure, stress and burnout; and, unrealistic expectations due to a lack of resources. Tasks that inhibit visibility emerged as a minor theme. Table 5.2 provides a depiction of participants' responses to challenges encountered in fulfilling NCLB requirements.

Extreme Pressure, Stress, and Burnout

Interviewees conveyed feeling pressure, stress, and burnout due to their attempts to meet state mandates. These feelings are consistent with Anthes (2002), who asserted that high stakes testing and assessments have created added pressure, particularly for principals assigned to inner city schools. The principals discussed pressure due to accountability mandates. Two participants indicated that the pressure has created health concerns for them. All participants expressed that the pressure is not only related to NCLB, but also there are issues related to dealing with innumerable social issues and *baggage* that permeate into the school. Their responses are comparable to the findings of Portin (2000), who found that complex and additional mandates have created increased job pressure. According to Jerald (2002), there is a great deal more anguish for [all] principals due to greater accountability.

The principals expressed concerns with their inability to cope with the stress of working in inner city schools. Concerns that include poverty, poor nutrition, lack of

preparation for school, and low parental involvement. Moreover, they described how the impact of accountability, coupled with social issues has created undue pressure and stress. The inner city elementary school principals in this study further expressed concerns with stress as it pertains to things that they believe they have little or no control over. These findings correlate with the research of Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000) who found that there are variables for which principals do not have control such as absenteeism, a lack of parental involvement, and poor health. These variables hinder their abilities to ensure student achievement and to meet state mandates.

Unrealistic Expectations and Lack of Resources

Principals in this study also discussed unrealistic expectations due to a lack of resources and support. They indicated that there are an exorbitant amount of needs that must be addressed in inner city communities and schools. Furthering the proposition that expectations are unrealistic due to the lack of resources, Johnson (2004) found that principals feel an increase in responsibility and a decrease in funding and resources.

The participants in this study further articulated concerns that the new mandates are aimed at improving student achievement for minorities, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and migrants; however, the mandate does not include a plan to address schools with an enormous number of students who fall into these various categories. No additional funding is provided to assist principals in tackling social issues that hinder their efforts in meeting state and federal educational requirements. They further expressed that schools receive incentive funds for meeting

state mandates. Funding is awarded to schools that receive or maintain a letter of A or to schools that increase their performance grade. This funding can be used for school improvement programs, student achievement, and/or staff and faculty incentive (bonus) pay. Participants explained that high performing schools meet standards and receive recognition funds constantly, whereas inner city schools--the schools that have the greatest needs for additional funds--struggle to meet and maintain minimum standards and recognition funds are rarely earned.

Impediments to Visibility and Accessibility

The literature confirmed that inner city school principals must act as public servants and avail themselves to the school and the community. The principal must relay the school's vision and mission to key stakeholders: teachers, staff, parents, community leaders, and business leaders (Portin, DeArmond, Gundlach, & Schneider, 2003). Servant Leadership and the ability to communicate the school's vision and mission require the principal to be accessible and available. Findings in this study revealed that inner city school principals are concerned with extraneous duties and responsibilities that inhibit their ability to be more visible in classrooms and more accessible to all stakeholders. Three of the principals expressed frustrations with having to deal with social issues, discipline problems, and communal challenges, such as violence and drugs all of which hinder their level of desired accessibility. These challenges spill over into their schools causing a negative impact to the daily operations of their schools.

Participants' responses resonated with Lippman, Burns, and McArthur's (1996) observations that schools in impoverished communities are negatively impacted because student achievement is affected by neighborhood characteristics. Participants explained that these challenges are time consuming and take away from important tasks such as classroom visits; however, they can not be ignored and must be addressed. In the literature, Howey (1999) reinforced this concern by explaining the importance of understanding the school in the community and how it influences the lives of students.

Table 5.2

Challenges Encountered in Fulfilling NCLB Requirements

Extreme Pressure, Stress, and Burnout*	Unrealistic Expectations due to Lack of Support/Resources*	Impediments to Visibility and Accessibility*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stress level, mentality, and mind set of inner city school principals is so different</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The NCLB mandates are ridiculous, there is little or no support and resources</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness means visibility and accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The pressure is tremendous, we have reports, reports to show accountability</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am constantly trying to find resources</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To build relationships you must be present</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have tremendous pressure to show that I have an adequate, successful school</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am aggressive in seeking outside resources, they are increasingly limited</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can't sit behind desk, get out, get down and dirty</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The amount of pressure and sick feeling when waiting for school grades</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am in a school where they keep taking money</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Get out of my office and talk to everyone</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You have to build self esteem, there are fights, disruption, mad parents, you rarely have this stress in other settings</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The expectations are different and unrealistic. Inner city students enter school low</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No luxury in the inner city school of sitting and thinking</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You don't have a kid push a teacher around, great number of children who need nurturing</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are expected to teach what should have been taught at home and bring them up to grade level</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You must be on your feet and see what is going on, you have to be visible</i>

*Words, Statements, phrases according to interviewees' responses.

Note: Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Table 5.2 (Continued)

Extreme Pressure, Stress, and Burnout*	Unrealistic Expectations due to Lack of Support/ Resources*	Impediments to Visibility and Accessibility*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I feel a great responsibility as an inner city school principal</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>It is hard when you are not getting the support</i> <i>We are expected to raise children at the school site</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>They need to cut all those meetings in middle of the day</i> <i>They should not pull principals out of their buildings for meetings</i>

*Words, statements, phrases according to interviewees' responses.

Note. Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Perceived Preparedness for Inner City School Principalship

One major theme, minimal and generic coursework, and two minor themes, informal preparation and preparedness recommendations, emerged from the third guided research question. Table 5.3 illustrates the responses which lead to the themes.

Discussion related to these themes focused on the adequacy of preparedness for inner city school principalship. Interviewees discussed their experiences with preparedness for their current positions.

Minimal and Generic Coursework

The interviews revealed that the five principals received minimal training with no specificity on working in an inner city school. Participants expressed their beliefs that most inner city school principals do not receive adequate or the appropriate training necessary to succeed as an inner city school principal. The participants explained that most of their training was attained from previous assignments before or during their inner

city school principalship. Consequently, they took the initiative to ensure knowledge of running an inner city school after accepting the position. Additionally, the principals discussed innumerable state and district trainings which were made available subsequent to their inner city school assignment. This information is consistent with Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez (2000), who found that school districts target inner city school principals for trainings designed to improve low performing inner city schools. The researchers further revealed that inner city school principals were experienced supervisors, managers, and instructional leaders; however, there was no formal training for addressing inner city school challenges.

Informal Preparation

Two interviewees described proactive and informal preparation. They explained that past non-administrative positions paved the way for their inner city school principalship. One of the principals cited working as an inner city school reading specialists and a Title I reading supervisor. The other principal referred to his experience as an inner city school coach. This type of informal preparation is supported by Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, and Rincones-Gomez's (2000) supposition that inner city school principals were prepared while serving in other positions. The researchers further explained that due to the challenges involved in working in the inner city, principals tend to automatically assume the role of instructional leader as well as taking on roles unrelated to curriculum and instruction. The participants in the study explained that without prior experiences in non-administrative roles, they would not have been

prepared. Most importantly, they pointed out that without subsequent positions they would not be effective.

Preparedness Recommendations

The participants discussed recommendations for ensuring that principals assigned to inner city schools are prepared. In fact, the literature shows that inner city school principals are the best source of information for coordinating trainings and establishing district, state, and federal mandates; however, they are often ignored. This is evidenced when Dandridge, Edwards, and Pleasants (2000) revealed that experiences divulged by inner city school principals have been discounted giving little or no reverence to their recommendations when proposing educational reform including the role of inner city school principals. The researchers further pointed out that inner city school principals are cognizant of the school, home, and community connection. To that end, all of the participants in this study eagerly communicated recommendations for improving the current performance evaluation system for inner city school principals. Portin (2000) suggested that shared experiences of inner city school principals are unique and necessary. Participants in this study further expressed that their experiences in the inner city school enabled them to share information by means of their substantial experiences. Moreover, their expressed recommendations reflected the statement of Portin who explained that principals assigned to inner city schools can provide value information and should be given the opportunity to publicize their obstacles which are relevant and often not addressed when politicians establish criteria.

Principals in the study recommended training that would encompass experience in all settings. They further recommended that although matching strengths to specific schools is vital, it was suggested that principals should not remain in a specific setting. Principals in this study recommended that evaluation systems should be developed with specific goals and objectives according to the needs of the school. This recommendation made by the participants reflected the findings of Marlow (2002), who indicated that school districts must focus on evaluation systems that enable principals to customize performance objectives and goals.

Table 5.3

Perceived Preparedness for Inner City School Principalship

Minimal and Generic Coursework*	Informal Preparation*	Preparedness Recommendation*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I wasn't close to being ready!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I was a former athlete and coach in an inner city school, that prepared me</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There should be extensive training in all settings, not just over the summer</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I had no concept of it!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in an inner city school as a teacher, reading specialist and a reading supervisor for Title I schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Principals should be exposed to all levels and different socioeconomic groups</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are basic training topics; budget, personnel, management, and staff development 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Principals need experience with rich, middle, working classes, and poverty levels</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Those are generic and can be taught to anybody</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Principals should have the opportunity to work in more than one setting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There was preparedness for basic task in leadership classes</i> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>They talk about the whole child not kids who come to school hungry</i> 		

*Words, statements, phrases according to interviewees' responses.

Note. Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Table 5.3 (Continued)

Minimal and Generic Coursework*	Informal Preparation*	Preparedness Recommendation*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They are not addressing kids who have been awake all night because their mother was being beaten</i> • <i>No one said anything, but here are the keys</i> 		

*Words, statements, phrases according to interviewees' responses.

Note. Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Perceived Connection Between School Performance Grades and Principals' Evaluation

As it pertains to the fourth research question, perceived preparedness for inner city school principalship, statements garnered (See Table 5.4) from participants during their interviews generated two major themes. Participants were asked to discuss their perceptions as they relate to connecting their performance evaluations and school performance grades. Interviewees believed that their current performance evaluation system is generic and subjective. They also expressed the belief that the performance system is just a formality. Hence, interviewees revealed that the outcome of their school's performance grade is of greater influence than the indicators outlined in their district's performance appraisal system.

Generic and Subjective Performance Evaluation System

The principals indicated that the system used for performance evaluation has no merit for required duties and responsibilities when it comes to operating an inner city

school. One of the principals described the district's performance evaluation system as politically motivated and subjective. This is supported by the research of Reeves (2004), who described many evaluation systems as contradictory and often highly dependent on the opinion of the evaluator. Iwanicki (1999) concurred with this and presented similar findings. He revealed that principals expressed concerns with being evaluated using an instrument with no correlation to what inner city school principals actually do on a daily basis to improve student achievement.

Interviewees explained that each school is unique and what is required in one school may not be necessary in another, specifically in other settings. This relates to the findings of McAdams and Barilla (2003), who asserted that school districts and policymakers should customize their principal evaluation systems to meet the goals and objectives of schools and individual administrators. Principals specifically expressed the need to restructure the current performance evaluation system with emphasis on individual schools and principals.

Preponderance of School Grading

The principals in this study indicated that many stakeholders including parents, community leaders, district, and state officials often measure a principal's effectiveness by the school's overall performance on standardized test. This finding correlates with Reeves' (2004), who found that more than half of the existing instruments used to evaluate principals were connected to how the school's overall performance is graded. To bolster principals' beliefs that school grading is linked to their job performance, the

literature revealed that performance evaluation systems for principals are directly connected to student achievement and test scores and that the reputation of principals are connected to the school's performance evaluation (Johnson, 2004; Marlow, 2002).

The principals in this study expressed discontentment and concerns with having the school's grade factored into evaluating their performance. Heck and Marcoulides (1996) defined this method of evaluation as results-based which relies strictly on outcomes such as school grading. The participants believe that a results-based evaluation system does not factor in the impediments of working in inner city schools. Expressed concerns provided by participants as it pertains to the usage of their current evaluation system are similar to those described by Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000), who indicated that results-based evaluation systems do not recognize variables of which principals have no control.

Table 5.4

<i>Perceived Connection Between School Performance Grade and Principals' Evaluation</i>	
<i>Generic and Subjective Evaluation System*</i>	<i>Preponderance of School Grading*</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>They just kind of grabbed a system a made it fit without much thought</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Unfortunately, we are all measured by the school grading system</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There has to be weight for certain situations, whether you are rural or an inner city school or a middle class school</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Do they [high performing schools] all get high evaluations, or is just me that is being evaluated based on the grade of my school?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The assessment system is politically motivated, dictated, and extremely subjective</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Only that grade is looked at, which is unfortunate because that is the only thing that the parents look at, too</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>It does not show what we do on a daily basis This is a piece of paper that doesn't say anything</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The need to look at the growth and the school grade should be secondary to that</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A lot of the competencies principals hit on them, I think taking it a step further is in inner city schools where all the hardships that children bring with them</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Principals should be evaluated based on fair computation for everyone that takes into account socioeconomics, culture, unique demands of that school</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Children with dirty clothes, raggedy shoes, may be he can't sit without someone else, but we have to reach them and teach them, that's not addressed in our evaluation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There are some "A" schools that do not have "A" principals. They just happened to be plopped in an "A" school. There are some wonderful "F" school principals that are extraordinary and very successful and they happen to be plopped in an "F" school</i>

*Words, statements, phrases according to interviewees' responses.

Note: Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Table 5.4 (Continued)

Generic and Subjective Evaluation System*	Preponderance of School Grading*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The appraisal system is a joke, it evaluates all of the principals regardless of the setting or barriers</i> • <i>All schools can not be run in the same manner, what one principal has to do is totally different from another</i> • <i>To rate a principal that works in the inner city the same as you rate a principal that is in the “burbs” is not fair</i> • <i>There are other things that I do at this school that should be rated</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I hesitate to use the current school grading procedure to evaluate anybody-a principal, assistant principal or teachers</i>

*Words, statements, phrases according to interviewees’ responses.

Note. Italicized phrases are the direct quotes of participants.

Conclusions

The data analysis of the lived experiences of five principals assigned to inner city elementary schools faced with complying with No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates revealed that participants shared similar experiences, ideals, perceptions, and concerns. Similar to the responses of inner city school principals in other studies (Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000; Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996; Portin 2000; Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000), principals in this study described comparable experiences. They expressed concerns with increased job pressure, responsibility of coordinating non-instructional needs, and managing resources. They conveyed concerns with being responsible for educational barriers of which that had no control. They referred to a host of educational barriers such as high mobility, students entering school ill-equipped, violence, a lack of parental involvement, poor attendance, high teacher attrition, and adult illiteracy.

When principals in this study shared their experiences, they often compared and referred to principals in other settings. Moreover, they discussed their own experiences in other settings. Like their colleagues assigned to inner city schools, the principals described examples of coping with social issue challenges, feelings of ineptness and inequity, extreme pressure, stress, and burnout. They further described their level of preparation and provided recommendations for ensuring preparedness for inner city school principals. They revealed concerns with their district's current practice of evaluating principals. Their concerns with the evaluation system were described as

generic, political, and subjective. The greatest concerns shared by the principals appeared to be connecting the school's annual grade to their overall performance as a principal.

Although there were limitations set forth in this study including having the interviews conducted by a novice researcher charged with executing an interview protocol which consisted of semi-structured open-ended questions, responses set forth by participants in this study as it pertains to the impact of the NCLB provided a clear understanding of how the current accountability system impacts the role and performance evaluation of inner city elementary school principals.

The findings of this study support the following conclusions:

1. Principals assigned to inner city schools conveyed an overwhelming sense of responsibility to address social issues subsequent to addressing student achievement.
2. Principals in this study believed that the NCLB mandates target inner city schools. Therefore, inner city school principals are directly targeted prompting feelings of ineptness and inadequate treatment.
3. Inner city school principals described experiencing extreme pressure, stress, and burnout due to accountability issues related to NCLB requirements and school grading.
4. The mandates of NCLB were enacted to address closing the achievement gap for specific subgroups: economically disadvantaged, minorities, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and migrant

students. Inner city principals invariably service mass numbers of students in several if not all of the identified subgroups. To that end, the principals described concerns with insufficient resources and support related to providing services and implementing initiatives to increase student achievement.

5. Principals in this study believed that the key to an effective principalship requires being visible and accessible. There were concerns with the number of daily emergencies, interruptions, off campus meetings, trainings, conferences, communal, and non-communal challenges that inhibit their abilities for greater visibility and accessibility to key stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, and community leaders.
6. Principals assigned to inner city schools require additional training other than the basic core leadership courses required for the principalship. The basic core curriculum for principals was described as minimal and generic.
7. Principals assigned to inner city schools receive informal training via non-administrative positions and by participating in conferences and workshops designed specifically to address inner city schools.
8. Principals with experience working in inner city schools have invaluable insight and seek to share recommendations for improving student achievement and meeting NCLB mandates.

9. Principals believed that the instrument used to evaluate their performance is generic with a subjective and political connotation.
10. Principals are concerned that the accountability impact of NCLB and school grading outweigh the indicators utilized to evaluate school principals. They explained that the performance evaluation system is secondary to school grading when evaluating their effectiveness as a principal.

Recommendations

Implications for Practice

This study enabled inner city elementary school principals to voice their experiences and beliefs concerning the impact of NCLB and school grading on their role and their perceived effectiveness. This phenomenological study gives political officials as well as state, local, and district educational leaders the opportunity to understand the challenges of complying with the NCLB mandate in an inner city school environment. It provides a broader look into what is required to ensure compliance. Politicians and educational leaders are afforded an opportunity to analyze what inner city school principals have established as challenges and concerns with meeting the needs of impoverished students. This study serves many purposes by providing a snapshot of the connection between inner city school preparedness, how inner city school principals are evaluated, and the impact on their role since the implementation of the NCLB accountability system.

The study contributes to the literature in the area of understanding and improving ways in which to support inner city school principals. It is apparent from this study that principals assigned to inner city schools believe that there is inadequate training, inequitable treatment, a lack of resources, a constant need to prove their ability, and the ongoing concern with punitive connotations. Insights raised in this study may be beneficial to educational leaders who are seeking ways to improve inner city school effectiveness while simultaneously improving student achievement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study focused on five inner city elementary school principals in one of the largest urban school district in the United States, the interview protocol can be utilized for principals in other settings (suburban, rural, high and low socio-economics) and levels (elementary, middle, senior high, and adult education) to ascertain their viewpoints of the impact of NCLB accountability on their role. This may provide insight as to the similarities and differences of other settings and levels when comparing the expectations set forth by political and educational leaders responsible for educational initiatives and mandates. Therefore, the following recommendations for further research are being proposed:

1. The utilization of the same interview protocol and techniques at the middle and senior high school level.
2. Utilization of the same interview protocol and techniques for suburban and rural area schools.

3. Utilization of the same interview protocol for inner city schools in smaller school district.
4. Repetition of the study utilizing more principals, since this study was conducted with a sample of five principals.
5. Implementation of a study ascertaining the experiences of retired/former inner city school principals and their role prior to the enactment of NCLB.
6. Implementation of a study ascertaining the experiences and beliefs of teachers concerning the impact of complying with NCLB.
7. Implementation of a study involving legislators and educational policymakers to ascertain their knowledge and awareness of the inner city school principals' role in ensuring compliance with NCLB mandates.
8. Utilize results from this qualitative study to create a survey instrument to test the findings across a large population.

Recommendations for Educational Policymakers

The following recommendations are aimed at educational decision makers. The suggestions are presented to provide a framework for which to consider when restructuring and addressing issues related to meeting No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates:

1. Provide additional resources to inner city school principals designed to address identified social issues specific to the needs of individual schools.

2. Establish an accountability system that ensures involvement of all stakeholders including parents, community, and other social agencies. In the literature, Wong and Shen (2003) pointed out that holding principals solely accountable will only address the surface of narrowing the achievement gap.
3. Provide comprehensive training and practical exposure that would ensure principal preparedness for all socioeconomic settings.
4. Provide the opportunity for inner city school principals to establish realistic and attainable goals that would ensure leadership effectiveness.
5. Establish a principal [school site administrator] performance evaluation system that includes a formula for identifying variables that negatively impact the ability of principals to ensure academic achievement.

Contributions of the Study

Accountability measures imposed by NCLB mandates have impacted the role of all principals. However, the greatest impact is for inner city school principals. NCLB was designed to address specific subgroups: minorities, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and economically disadvantaged students. Inner city schools are characterized by a significant number of students from the targeted subgroups. Principals in this study described their experiences in dealing with impoverished students, violence, crime, excessive disciplinary problems, poor attendance, lack of parental involvement, a disproportionate number of students with disabilities, and the responsibility of implementing NCLB goals outlined in the mandate. Moreover,

principals in this study have reported concerns related to the correlation of school grading and instruments utilized to evaluate their performance. Although all principals share concerns pertaining to standards, student achievement, school grading, and accountability, participants described how differently they must address impediments related to improving student achievement because the challenges are insurmountable.

This study adds to understanding the magnitude of how NCLB has impacted the role of the inner city school principal. It also provides broader knowledge of communal and non-communal challenges that hinder student achievement. Moreover, it provides additional information by educational researchers, such as Jerald (2003), Anthes (2002), and Kysilka (2003), who revealed that it is necessary to promote the restructuring of accountability and evaluative instruments for improved effectiveness of the principalship.

From a qualitative perspective, this study provides insight for restructuring performance evaluation systems, preparation programs for principals, and the need to address hindrances that inhibit meeting NCLB. Additionally, it highlights the impact that NCLB has had on the role and how inner city elementary school principals perform their duties and responsibilities. This study further provides a look at how inner city school principals approach social issues, politics, and educational issues related to narrowing the achievement gap for identified subgroups. It gives a voice to principals who have experience working in the inner city, with impoverished students, families, and communities. It looks at principals who had experienced the pressure, stress, and burnout related to meeting mandates while simultaneously addressing crime, violence, drugs,

illiteracy, low parental involvement, teacher attrition, low or no expectations, and a lack of resources and support.

Many of the issues voiced by participants explicitly addressed Jerald's (2003) research findings that non-compliance with NCLB could have severe repercussions for inner city school principals. Non-compliance often results in poor evaluations, demotions, reassignments, and most seriously, termination. Consequently, the supposition of participants in this study conveyed that there should be emphasis on how to better support inner city school principals and how to restructure the practice of connecting NCLB compliance with principal effectiveness. Moreover, the participants believe that the disregard for addressing social issues is detrimental because these issues are the true obstruction of student achievement.

The discussion addressed implications for future research, inner city schools, and inner city school principals. Educational leaders must emphasize the importance of including those directly impacted for improving student achievement. They must be cognizant of their perspectives and experiences concerning the need to narrow achievement gaps in educational programs. Principals who work directly with inner city students, parents, and community leaders can be the educational consultants when policies and mandates are proposed. The study also suggested that principals assigned to inner city schools are the advocates who can educate political leaders about the needs of the inner city school. The study suggested that working in inner city schools presents

enormous and ignored challenges for principals. Their voices should be heard in future qualitative studies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter includes an overview of the study, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, limitations of the study, implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and its mandated accountability system has greatly impacted the role of school-level administrators. Legislative mandates are directed towards states to set higher expectations and improve educational programs for all students. NCLB was authorized to address students in specific subgroups: limited English proficient students, migrants, minorities, and students with disabilities in an effort to ensure attainment of a defined level of proficiency. Inner city schools are characterized by a significant number of students from the targeted subgroups

Many school districts have currently created a nexus between principal performance evaluations, student achievement, and overall school performance grades. Inner city elementary school principals are threatened with the possibilities of low performance evaluations, career redirection, loss of school level control, school sanctions, and reconstitution. Principals assigned to inner city elementary schools are negatively impacted due to the challenges that hinder academic progress such as poverty, violence, health issues, poor attendance, and low parental involvement.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions and lived experiences of principals assigned to inner city elementary schools faced with greater accountability for executing the mandates outlined in NCLB. In an effort to fully understand and study this phenomenon, this dissertation was written from the social constructivist approach. Five inner city elementary school principals met criteria and agreed to participate in this study. In response to four guiding research questions, data analysis led to the emergence of seven major themes and three minor themes which described the results of this study.

The emergent themes included: (1) an overwhelming sense of responsibility to address social issues as a priority, (2) feelings of ineptness and inequitable treatment, (3) extreme pressure, stress and burnout, (4) unrealistic expectations due to a lack of support and resources, (5) daily tasks, emergencies and meetings that inhibit visibility and availability, (6) minimal and generic training and college coursework, (7) informal and proactive preparation, (8) recommendations for inner city school principal preparedness, (9) generic and subjective performance evaluation system, and (10) preponderance of school grading via utilization of a results-based evaluation system.

This phenomenological study provides political and educational leaders an opportunity to understand the challenges of complying with NCLB mandates in an inner city school setting. They are afforded a chance to analyze what participants have identified as hindrances to meeting the needs of inner city students. Contributions to existing literature would assist in defining the support needed for inner city school

principals while simultaneously improving student achievement. Recommendations for future studies are proposed in an effort to provide additional in-depth insight as to the similarities and differences of other school settings and levels with emphasis on the establishment of mandates instituted by political and educational leaders. In terms of research contributions, from a qualitative perspective this study adds to the literature by means of providing personal experiences of how NCLB has impacted the role of principals assigned to inner city schools. Additionally, this study provides understanding for the beginning of open dialogue necessary for initiating the process to transform how individuals are prepared for the principalship, revising current performance evaluation systems, and the need to address the true challenges and barriers that impede meeting NCLB mandates.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX A
Barry University
Informed Consent Form

Your participation in a research study is requested. The title of the study is The Accountability Impact of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 on Principals Assigned to Inner City Elementary Schools: A Phenomenological Study of Shared Challenges and Experiences. The research is being conducted by Linda A. Amica, a student in the Leadership and Education department at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Education. The study aims to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act in relation to their roles as principals assigned to inner city elementary schools. In accordance with these aims, the following procedures will be used: We anticipate the number of participants will be five elementary school principals.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following: read and sign the informed consent form and participate in a 90-minute interview and time for clarification and member check.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on your on your employment.

There are no known potential psychological, physical, and/or social risks or harm involved in this research. Please note that you have the option not to participate. Although there are no known direct benefits to you, your participation in this study may help provide insight and serve as the voice for elementary principals assigned to inner city elementary schools.

Moreover, your participation in this study may help provide and understanding as to how the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has impacted the role and effectiveness of the inner city elementary school principal in meeting local, state, and federal mandates. The results of the study may also provide invaluable information to educators and politicians who are interested in the inner city elementary school principals' views of accountability for administrators, their responsibilities for school improvement, student achievement, and the state's system of grading schools as outlined by the state and NCLB.

Although anonymity is not possible or appropriate in a qualitative study, as a research participant, information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Any published results of the research will refer to the group responses only and no names will be used in the study. All data will be kept in a locked file drawer in the researcher's office and the data will be destroyed five years after the study is completed. Your signed consent form will be kept separated from the data in a locked file along with the demographic data. Your actual responses to the questions will be coded to further protect confidentiality and the code will only be known to the researcher.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Linda A. Amica, at (305) 281-8816, my supervisor, Dr. Teri Melton, at (305) 899-3869, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Nildy Polanco, at (305) 899-3020.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this study by Linda A. Amica and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records, I give voluntary consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

Appendix B
Interview Form

APPENDIX B

Interview Form

ID# _____

Number of years in current position _____

Number of years as an elementary school principal _____

Age _____

Highest Degree _____

1. You are part of this study because you are currently assigned to an inner city school which was determined by the states economic survey. The survey revealed that 90 % or more of your school's population qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. How do you define an inner city school?
2. Briefly describe your professional Educational Leadership career?
3. Describe briefly your work in other educational settings: Suburban, rural, high or low SES, high/low performing schools?
4. What measurable objectives found in the performance appraisal do you feel are truly indicative of what you do on a daily basis?
5. How would you describe the current appraisal system utilized by your school district for assessing school site administrators?
6. How would you describe the duties and responsibilities for the inner city school principal? Discuss how these would be different in another setting?
7. Does NCLB and school grading have any effects on your role as a principal?
 - a. If your answer is "yes," how would you describe the effects of NCLB and school grading on your role as a principal?
 - b. If your answer is "no," why do you feel that NCLB and school grading has no effects on your role as principal?
8. Think of NCLB and school grading, describe your experience as a principal assigned to an inner city school?
9. Describe your level of preparedness for your assignment as an inner city school principal as it relates to NCLB?
10. Should inner city school principals be assessed or have their performance measured according to the schools grade as outlined by the state?
11. Should inner city school principals be assessed using the same performance appraisal systems as their counterparts assigned to suburban or high performing school settings? Please elaborate?

12. Should preparedness for principalship be the same for all school administrators in any setting: inner city, suburban, rural, high SES, and low SES? Please elaborate?
13. This study is about understanding inner city school principals' experiences in meeting the goals outlined in NCLB. Is there anything that I have not asked you but it would be beneficial for me to know and share that would add to the topic?

Appendix C
Confidentiality Agreement

APPENDIX C

Confidentiality Agreement

As a member of the research team investigating, The Accountability Impact Of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 On Principals Assigned To Inner City Schools: A Phenomenological Study of Shared Challenges and Experiences. I understand that I will have access to confidential information about study participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my obligation to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about study participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information unless specifically authorized to do so by office protocol or by a supervisor acting in response to applicable protocol or court order, or public health or clinical need.
- I understand that I am not to read information and records concerning study participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.
- I understand that a breach of confidentiality may be grounds for disciplinary action, and may include termination of employment.
- I agree to notify my supervisor immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Printed Name