1996

The Role of Principals in Predominantly African-American Urban Middle Schools With Low Suspension Rates.

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THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS IN PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOLS WITH LOW SUSPENSION RATES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Administrative and Foundational Services.

by

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August, 1996

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends
for their love, encouragement and support.

To my wife, Nduta,

and

our son, Mukuria,

To whom I am forever indebted, and who provided constant reassurance,

love, inspiration and support when I really needed it;

To my parents Nyokabi and Mukuria Wa Gathogo;

who taught and encouraged me to work with singleness of purpose;

and never to give in to temporal obstacles;

and finally to my brother and sisters;

friends and well wishers;

your support directly or indirectly meant so much to me.

I hope you are proud of this accomplishment.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to all the people who guided me in shaping the purpose and direction of this study. I hope that when they see this dissertation they will realize that their role in encouraging, sharing and teaching me was not in vain. I am extremely grateful to my committee members for their participation, support and belief in what I was doing.

I wish to acknowledge my family. My wife Nduta and Mukuria who encouraged, consoled, and supported my efforts throughout my undergraduate studies. I felt I was not spending as much time with them as should have but I am grateful they understood my predicaments.

I would like to express my appreciation to my parents for raising me in an atmosphere of unconditional love and high expectations that has been always a part of my life. They imparted in me determination, persistence and courage that has helped me in many situations in life. I also cherish the early lessons, discipline, values and encouragement provided by my mother and father which have given me strength and courage to face many obstacles in life.

Dr. Kofi Lomotey, a friend and a mentor, deserves special mention for his invaluable contributions concerning the form and content throughout the planning and implementation stages of this dissertation. He was especially diligent in review of the written work and made a number of very valuable suggestions that considerably strengthened the presentation of material. In addition, he provided considerable insight
and encouragement and always seemed to be able to make time from his busy schedule to work with me on the project. His interest, love and dedication is greatly appreciated. I have been fortunate to have had Kofi as my major advisor.

I am thankful to Dr. Charles Teddlie for allowing me to attend a course he taught on qualitative methodology which enabled me to acquire skills for qualitative data analysis and writing of case studies. Throughout the study, Dr. Teddlie provided important methodological guidance regarding the qualitative part of the study. His time, comments and encouragement made my research design strong. I am thankful also to Dr. Eugene Kennedy who was not officially on my committee but provided important methodological suggestions on the quantitative part of this study that, in retrospect, were crucial.

Appreciation is given to Dr. Richard Fossey and Dr. Jim Fox for their encouragement. They continually enquired as to the progress I was making which meant so much to me. Appreciation is also given to two of my fellow graduate students: Jeff Gagne and John Rugutt. Jeff proofread every chapter before I turned it into my major professor and provided invaluable suggestions. John worked with me for many hours on quantitative data analysis and provided invaluable suggestions. In addition, appreciation is given to all the friends and colleagues in the Department of Administrative and Foundational Services at Louisiana State University who have offered kindness and encouragement in many ways.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates. The basic research questions were: How do the perceptions of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspensions rates compare with perceptions of other principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools; and 2) what alternatives to suspensions do principals use in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates.

I approached this study using a mixed methodology strategy, using quantitative and qualitative techniques. Survey items of 54 principals from seven urban middle schools in Louisiana showed significant differences in the way principals responded to various survey items. Four independent variables had significant effects on dependent variables. The four independent variables were: principal's teaching experience, ethnicity, number of years served in the same school and the size of the school.

Four principals from predominantly African-American urban middle schools were selected for case studies. They were observed and interviewed in the fall of 1995. They were compared on the basis of how they perceived and interpreted the district's discipline policy, how they perceived and interpreted the district's suspension policy and how they administered discipline and suspension in their schools.

The findings indicate that principals in these schools perceived their district suspension policy as a guide. They followed the district suspension policy but with a
contingent approach to discipline, making changes depending on the circumstances. The findings also reveal that the four principals had salient characteristics that were prevalent across the four cases studies. All the principals were reluctant to suspend students, and therefore used other alternatives to suspensions, supported teachers and involved parents in school activities. They also cared and were concerned about students, had an established routine which they followed consistently and had maintained a structured environment in which there were few opportunities for misbehaving. Principals’ responses to the interview questions lead to implications for theory development, for practitioners and for further research.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Discipline in U.S. public schools has become a pressing problem and has escalated to a level where students have difficulty learning and teachers have difficulty teaching. The Carnegie Commission (1988) reported that public schools are experiencing discipline problems which have increased the levels of student dropouts, absenteeism and suspensions. Short, Short, and Blanton (1994) pointed out that disciplinary problems are widespread in U.S. public schools. I define discipline conceptually as the degree of order and structure (related to issues such as time on task) within a school. Ideally, student discipline is imposed from within--self discipline. Alternatively it comes from family members, teachers and community members.

Antecedent conditions in schools also influence behavior: authoritarian behavior toward students characterized by oppression and petty rules, teacher disrespect toward students, callousness, disinterest, incompetence, arbitrary and inconsistent rule enforcement, and inadequacy of curriculum may elicit disciplinary problems. However, disciplinary problems do not occur in a vacuum. Karlin and Berger (1994) point out that every action serves a certain function; they challenge educators to analyze students' disruptive behaviors in order to address the underlying problems. Discipline in schools is everyone's business. Everyone is affected by disruptive, violent and misbehaving students. When a student is unable or unwilling to behave in an acceptable manner, the school in a sense fails. Urban schools are
understaffed to such an extent that teachers are unable to interact with students on an individual basis. This creates a gap between students and teachers that results in student feelings of isolation and frustration.

Research (Wu, Pink, Crain, and Moles, 1982) indicates that many students who have discipline problems eventually drop out of school. No ideal cure exists for all types of misbehavior. Special efforts are required, therefore, to pinpoint the actual causes or motivation for misbehavior. This will require a critical examination of the school system (Grossnicke & Sesko, 1985).

The Carnegie Report (1988) pointed out that urban schools are particularly characterized by discipline problems which include drug related incidents, violence, fighting and vandalism. Urban schools serve a diverse population that includes African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans. Predominantly African-American urban schools are overcrowded and have poor physical, human and technological resources. McCarthy (1991) indicates that discipline problems prevalent in predominantly African-American urban schools are a result of many complex issues which include socioeconomic status, organizational structure, and cultural perspectives. He indicates that there is a mismatch between the curriculum and students' interests and values. Consequently, students resist the curriculum because it represents neither them nor their culture.

African-American students perceive the curriculum as irrelevant, for it does not meet their individual or societal needs and aspirations. They view the curriculum as something imposed on them by the dominant group. Misbehavior in the school or
classroom is often only a symptom of a larger problem troubling a student and, thereby, causing difficulty for that student, the teacher, and other students. Ogbu (1974) and Fine (1991) point out that school failure is a discourse of the inequality that exists in the larger U.S. society and is perpetuated by race, class and gender.

Several studies indicate that the principal plays a significant role in contributing to student performance, especially in more successful schools (Edmonds & Frederiksen, 1978, Vallina, 1975). Moreover, the way principals deal with discipline problems in their schools may have a negative or positive impact on the overall school climate. Wu, Pink, Crain, and Moles (1982) point out that many principals use student suspensions as a way of disciplining students in public schools. These authors argue that the suspension rate in public schools has increased to a critical point and that the use of suspension warrants reappraisal.

Those who oppose the use of suspensions as the backbone of discipline programs recommend the use of alternative learning centers operating on several different levels simultaneously. They argue that neither in-school nor out-of-school suspensions facilitate student learning because they both involve removing the student from the learning environment (Raebeck 1993; Short & Short, 1993). Out-of-school suspension involves the student being removed from the school premises for not more than ten days while in-school suspension refers to taking the student from the classroom to another environment on the school premises.

Research indicates that some schools have more disciplinary problems than others as measured by student suspension, absenteeism and dropout rates. Inner-city
schools in particular have high discipline problems (Children's Defense Fund Report, 1975; Elderman, Beck & Smith, 1975; Garibaldi & Bartley, 1988). Radin (1988) indicates that the use of suspensions appears to be discriminatory, with black students twice as likely to be suspended from schools as white students.

The proponents of suspension, on the other hand, view suspension as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. While some consider suspension a necessary means to cope with student misconduct, most regard it as a measure needed to protect individuals and school property. Some educators indicate that suspension facilitates the smooth and continuous running of schools. They suggest that suspension, like any other disciplinary measure, may reduce the chances for the recurrence of misbehavior at least for a short period immediately after the suspension. In addition, educators who favor the use of suspensions argue that it serves the purpose of pointing out the seriousness of misconduct and helps the student develop a better understanding of acceptable behavior at school. Suspension may serve as a deterrent and as a way of letting the students know what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Further, the proponents of suspension also view suspension as being needed to get parents involved in the school's efforts to solve the behavior challenges of their children (Garibaldi, 1979).

Statement of the Problem

The problem that was addressed in this study was that, in predominantly African-American urban middle schools, discipline challenges are too often addressed through imposition of in-school and out-of-school suspensions.
Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provide information on the factors related to principal leadership in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates. If these factors are identified, they can be recommended for schools with high levels of suspension. This might enhance student performance and increase teacher effectiveness in schools. I focused solely on suspension as a response to discipline problems.

This exploratory study provides the basis for future theory testing studies that would address the causal relationships between principal leadership and the levels of suspensions in predominantly African-American urban middle schools. I contend that there is a significant difference in perceptions between principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates and those principals in schools with high suspension rates with regard to the use of suspensions.

Research Questions

I explored the role of the principal in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates. I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do the perceptions of principals in predominantly African-American
urban middle schools that have low suspension rates compare with the perceptions of other principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with regard to the use of suspensions?

2. What alternatives to suspension do principals use in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates?

Specifically, my research hypotheses were:

1. There is a significant difference in perception of the use of school discipline between principals in schools with low suspension rates and their counterparts in schools with high suspension rates.

2. There is a significant difference in perception of the principal's use of suspension between principals in schools with low suspension rates as compared to principals in schools with high suspension rates.
CHAPTER TWO

The Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates. In the review of literature, I examined the way suspension is used as a disciplinary measure in many schools and the role of the principal in contributing to a conducive atmosphere for learning. It is impossible to discuss suspension without discussing discipline challenges. This is because suspension is the avenue which many principals use to respond to discipline challenges. The leadership role of the principal seems to be the most important determining factor affecting the learning process in school settings (Johnson & Johnson, 1990).

I examined the following four areas (1) principal’s perception of discipline; (2) principal’s perception of suspensions; (3) principal’s administration of discipline, and (4) the principal’s administration of suspension. A better understanding of each area is essential if conclusions are to be drawn on the role of principals in African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates. The process for collecting data for the literature review included the use of many research tools. I identified research reports through a computer search of ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) indexes from January 1970 to March 1995. I also conducted a computer search of Dissertation Abstracts International (1975-1995) in an effort to identify dissertations on this topic. I used books for reference which were identified through Louisiana On-line Access.
Principal's Perception of Discipline

Johnson and Johnson (1990) pointed out that there are many terms associated with the word “discipline” that could cause challenges in a school. It is important for public schools to plan and implement programs in order to assist principals and teachers with strategies to employ in an effort to address discipline challenges. The school organization may perpetuate a high level of discipline or lack of it. Moorehead and Griffin (1989) describe an organization as a system of task, reporting and authority relationships within which the work of the organization is done. School organizational structure involves the teachers, principal and the central office. Understanding school discipline as a challenge of organizational structure is a more useful and pragmatic approach than looking for a one-best solution that probably does not exist. A student’s experience with the entire school, as well as the congruence between the values and norms of the school, and those of students’ homes, neighborhoods, and work places, are critical. They determine whether groups of students will comply with school regulations or resist them (Purkey, 1990).

The size of the school and its location as well as the diversity of students play a big part in determining the nature of a particular school. The Carnegie Report (1988) described many urban schools as being large in size, having diverse student populations, and being in poor communities. The report indicated that many of these schools lacked purpose and coherence, and had neglected buildings and a negative physical appearance. They were characterized by a lack of coherent instructional programs and regular routines as well as a lack of a sense of community.
were unable to establish a consensus on common norms within the school and this contributed to their limited discipline, which in turn, resulted in high suspension rates in urban schools. All of these factors contribute to the low level of academic achievement in urban schools (Lomotey & Swanson, 1990).

Reed (1983) conducted an exploratory study in three school districts in the San Francisco-Oakland Bay area and identified the salient incidents of actual and potential student conflicts observed by principals and vice principals in the school area. The incidents of conflict were:

- Tardiness
- Cutting class
- Spontaneous fighting
- Disruptive school behavior
- Personal rivalries
- Extortion
- Theft
- Racial tension, and
- Unprovoked assaults (p. 76).

Principals and vice principals in the study felt that schools must be supportive of students if conflict and disruptive behavior were to be dealt with effectively. With the large sample in the study, students had the opportunity to defend their actions when they were involved in a conflict. Further, the principals felt that teachers and
administrators who were sensitive, fair, and who had high standards and a good relationship with students were most able to work with students with disruptive behaviors.

Barns (1992) conducted an ethnographic study of African-Americans in five high schools in Norfolk, Virginia. The purpose of the study was to explore why African-American males drop out of school. Unfair school disciplinary action and racial harassment were among the reasons for dropping out of school provided by many respondents.

Ward (1982) found that more disruptive behavior in schools can be tied to poor school climatic conditions rather than problems within students. He further reported that depersonalization among students and staff may be a major cause of discipline problems in schools. Students who leave school before graduation reported that they suffered from feelings of alienation and lack of purpose while attending school. Organizational factors may play an important role in creating environments conducive to good student behavior.

Campbell (1991) conducted a study of discipline in a predominantly African-American urban middle school. The study focused on student and teacher characteristics which influenced students' maladaptive behavior and the actions employed to address the challenges. The researcher examined 1,685 discipline referrals incurred by 374 sixth to eighth graders during the 1987-1988 school year. The findings of this study indicate that some of the primary causes of discipline problems are rooted in the nature of the school itself. The larger the school, the
more likely it is to have discipline challenges. This is consistent with the findings of the Carnegie Report (1988). Major implications of this study are that the disciplinary environment is affected by: (a) strong administrative leadership; (b) a climate of high expectations; (c) an atmosphere that is orderly without being rigid, and (d) an emphasis on students' acquiring basic skills, and (e) frequent monitoring of the progress of students.

Findings in the Safe School Study seem to indicate that suspension is significant in schools where there is a high degree of administrative centralization in discipline matters. A high correlation between good governance and suspension was also found (Wu et al., 1982). School management, teachers' judgments, and attitudes, socioeconomic status, and the academic bias present in a school are critical variables in studying discipline challenges in classrooms.

Wu et al. (1982) conducted the Safe School Study with the intention of addressing a number of questions related to crime and violence in the nation's public schools. The study was based on a national survey, taken in 1976, of more than 4,500 elementary and secondary schools. The findings of the Safe School investigation suggest that suspension is significant in schools where there is a high degree of administrative centralization in discipline matters. The study also showed that there was a negative correlation between good governance in a good school and suspensions.

**Summary on Principal's Perception of Discipline**

Successful school discipline can be achieved through framing discipline as an organizational issue. Understanding teacher and student behavior in a larger
organizational context provides a better opportunity to identify causes of poor student discipline and to structure more effective means for dealing with causes. Findings from research point out that organizational factors may play a critical role in creating environments conducive to good student behavior.

**Principal's Perception of Suspensions**

Socioeconomic background of the student is critical in education and may have a great impact on student attitudes about school. Disruptive behavior could be a way of resisting school, that gradually leads to suspension. While it is not true that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are undisciplined because their parents are poor, it is true that parents' education and social status are critical to learning. Lomotey and Swanson (1990) pointed out that African-Americans in urban schools, not unlike other students, require role models they can emulate among teachers and others in important positions. In addition, parents who have education and financial resources are more likely to provide their child assistance at home and provide the necessary resources. Such parents are more likely to be involved in school activities than parents who are poor. Often low income parents feel too intimidated to take part in any school activity (Fine, 1991).

The Safe School Study resulted in some troubling statistics (Short, Short and Blanton, 1994). Males were more likely to be suspended than females. African-Americans were twice as likely to be suspended as whites. Students whose fathers
did not work or who received free lunch were more likely to be suspended than those who did not receive free lunch.

Dramatically different patterns of suspension and dropping out by social class, ethnicity, and gender are prevalent in U.S. public schools. The patterns stand as evidence that the promise of equal educational opportunity is subverted institutionally by the guarantee of unequal educational outcomes. Consequently, students who begin with the greatest economic disadvantages receive the least enriching education and end up with fewer, less recognized diplomas (Fine, 1991). More African-American are referred to school administration than white students. The number of African-American students who are suspended from school is twice that of white students, which indicates that a student's race is important and should be considered. A study of suspensions and expulsions in Louisiana schools during 1991-1992 found that 41% of all suspensions and 58% of all expulsions were African-American males, even though they only comprised 22% of the school population. Black females constituted 21% of the school population and 19% of the students expelled, white females, comprising 25% of school enrollment accounted for only 3% of expulsions (Kennedy, 1993).

In a study that analyzed national data gathered for the Safe School Study, a number of relationships were explored to determine whether certain school organization variables influenced the suspension of students. Suspension rates could best be predicted by knowing the kind of school a student attended and knowing how that school was administered (Wu et al., 1982). This research indicates that critical
variables are teachers’ judgements and attitudes, school management and student governance practices, racial, socioeconomic, and academic bias present in the school.

In essence, the study suggested that, in addition to being affected by their behaviors, students' chances of being suspended increase if:

- teachers are seen by students as relatively uninterested in them;
- teachers believe that students are incapable of solving problems;
- disciplinary matters are handled largely by administrative rules;
- the school is not able to provide consistent and fair governance; or
- there is a relatively high degree of racial academic bias present in the school. (p. 271).

The chances of students being suspended are not only affected by the teacher's personal interest in the student, but can be affected by the ways in which teachers perceive students in particular and whether the teacher perceives students as capable of thinking and making logical decisions. It is most likely that teachers who think of students as being incapable of solving problems and thinking for themselves believe that the only solution for students with problems is to remove them from class. Sarason (1971) states that a dominant impression of school personnel is that a system exists; it is run by somebody in a central place; it operates as a source of obstacles to those within the system. Conversely, it is a major goal of the members of the system to protect themselves against the system, but no one individual can have an effect on the system. Another general belief is that the system is not working well and the individual's job could be performed more efficiently if the system operated differently. Sarason points out that this concept governs role performance.
Summary on Principal's Perception of Suspensions

Patterns of suspension seem to be based on gender, ethnicity and social class. Short, Short and Blanton (1994) point out that males are more likely to be suspended than females. African-American students are twice as likely to be suspended than whites. Students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be suspended than those from rich homes.

Principal's Administration of Discipline

Improving the professional practice of school principals has been examined from two streams of inquiry: reflection on what happens daily in practice, and an academic quest for understanding based on ideas about what principals should do to improve the learning environment for students. There are some critical notions about what principals are obliged to do in a compulsory system of schooling. Educational leaders assume an enormous obligation in a compulsory school system in a democratic society. The most important function of educational leadership is to build a structure of relationships within schools so that all children can learn. To fulfill this objective, educational leaders must create a good and nurturing atmosphere that is conducive to learning. This implies that administrators should use their professional knowledge and skills to foster conditions where all children can grow to their full potential. In order to do that, discipline problems must be addressed (Smith & Andrew, 1989).

Goodlad (1979) states that teaching is a moral profession; that is, only good things should happen at school. It is the role of the principal to orchestrate the
activities of teachers so that good things happen in classrooms. In the same notion, the principal has to set the pace for the level of discipline in a school. An effective leader should assist teachers in reducing the number of disciplinary problems that occur in the school. According to Johnson and Johnson (1990), principals can be assets or liabilities to those teachers who are trying to maintain discipline. They also must remain current in their organizational plans and make changes where they are needed.

There has been much discussion as to what constitutes a good school. To have a good school, we must focus on the quality of the workplace. Teachers who have positive attitudes toward their work are likely to be more committed and will perform at a higher level than will teachers who have negative feelings about their profession (Smith & Andrew, 1989). The principal has the difficult task of doing administrative duties and contributing to the creation of a good atmosphere for both teachers and students. This cannot be achieved by one person but requires full collaboration of teachers, students, and the administration.

Principals should be at the forefront of staff development. Johnson and Johnson (1990) point out that over the past few decades a variety of major challenges to education have caused educators to reconsider the goals and objectives of the schools. Challenges such as discipline, dropouts and teenage pregnancy must be faced daily by teachers. Many teachers have not been trained to work with students who demonstrate these problems. Therefore, it is imperative that excellent staff development programs be implemented in each school.
One of the most important organizational schemes principals must develop is the school-wide discipline plan. This plan must be developed by a committee of teachers, administrators, and others. Although principals have the last word when it comes to planning, the other members of the staff must be part of the initial planning and the plan must be based upon policies and guidelines developed by the district. This plan must be clearly stated and a consensus must be reached by all staff members (Johnson and Johnson, 1990).

The research of Edmonds (1979) supports the conclusion that what principals do on a daily basis has a powerful influence over the behavior of teachers as they interact with students in their classrooms. Inevitably, good leadership should minimize discipline challenges that are prevalent in the U.S. educational system. The leadership of the school principal is critical to improving the school environment for both teachers and students. Barnard (1938) points out that there is a reciprocal interaction between leader and followers. Without followers there cannot be leaders. He says that the followers are the ones that give a leader the mandate to rule. The same notion is applicable in a school situation. The principal must endeavor to interact with both teachers and students in order for learning to take place.

Studies of school effectiveness have repeatedly identified an orderly school climate as important. More recently, studies have aimed at identifying classroom processes within the school that are indicators of effectiveness (Springlefield, Teddlie & Suarez, 1985; Teddlie, Kirby, & Springfield, 1989; Virgilio, Teddlie, & Oescher, 1991). Teddlie et al. studied eight pairs of effective-ineffective schools. Classroom
observations were used to compare practices within each group of schools. They found that effective schools had a highly visible administrator and classroom instruction clearly focused on academics.

Principals vary widely in how they perceive their roles. These variations are evident in the three different foci identified in research on principals' styles or patterns of practice (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Hall & Hord, 1987; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Salley, McPherson, & Baehr, 1978): an administration or plant manager focus, an interpersonal relations or climate focus, and a student development focus.

Johnson and Johnson (1990) surveyed more than 5000 teachers concerning the role of the principals in preventing and eliminating school-wide disruptive problems. Ninety-five percent of the participants felt that the behavior of the principal, acting as the role model for teachers, pupils, parents and others would determine the learning atmosphere in the school and classroom. The importance of the role of the principal in preventing disruptive behavior in a school must be recognized for it is the principal, with the collaboration of teachers, who has to set the tone for a positive learning environment in the school.

Research (Wu et al., 1982) seems to indicate that schools influence the behavior characteristics of principals and how they deal with issues in their schools. Wiggins (1972) demonstrates a significant relationship between the principal's interpersonal orientation and the way teachers and students behave. As the principal's tenure increases so does the level of significance of the relationship
between their behavior characteristics and what is expected of them at school. Wiggins states that the observable behavior of the principal is a result of the engagement of the characteristic pattern of expressive behavior with the normative role expectations defined by the school and the larger school system. He further states that teachers and principals perceive their roles differently.

One distinguishing characteristic of the model urban school system is the diversity in quality and practice it contains. Therefore, one has to take into consideration the variations in the way in which individuals perceive the system. To understand diversity in role perception and performance requires that we look at factors ordinarily relegated to secondary status when we think in terms of the school system (Sarason, 1971). Two important factors are the degree to which principals feel they are in control and the extent to which the atmosphere is conducive to learning. Do principals act as if they are primarily in control of their destiny, or do they act as if they are largely a function of external conditions over which they have no control? Their actions are influenced by the way they perceive their effect on the system and the way in which they visualize their role in school, which includes discipline and suspension of students.

The principal's most effective role in school discipline is that of a facilitator of teacher-initiated discipline (Short & Short, 1990). Principals of schools with few discipline problems are aware of the challenges in their schools, but provide opportunities and support for teachers to handle them. When teachers ask for help with challenges, these principals provide resources and mediation to get the problem
solved. Even if they expect the teacher to handle routine problems, they are sensitive to difficult cases and will provide support accordingly. With this active support, teachers' handling of routine discipline incidents become more effective and independent. Thus, principals of "well-disciplined" schools support teachers in taking a leadership role in handling disciplinary problems. Administrative support for teachers contributes to their performance and willingness to stay in the field (Firestone, 1988). Teachers identify a number of barriers to their work that administrators can affect. The foremost of these is poor discipline. Teachers expect the principal to control the school's public spaces and to provide a sympathetic court of appeal when they have challenges controlling students.

Research on the principalship suggests that leadership roles that principals adopt do make a difference in determining school outcomes (Teddlie, Virgilio and Oescher, 1990). Research has begun to identify patterns of behavior that are particularly significant in determining school effectiveness. Research initiated by Edmonds (1979) Brookover and Lezotte (1979) identified a cluster of behaviors common to effective principals. Review of the Safe School Study and subsequent research conducted by Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1990) described these commonalities as follows:

Highly effective principals demonstrated high levels of commitment to goals for their schools. They articulated an overall vision for the schools, established high standards for goal achievement, and actively worked towards development of widespread agreement concerning such goals (page 56).
Researchers who examined effective principal strategies in different social contexts found that while principals in low and middle socioeconomic status schools used different strategies, there were certain characteristics which could be found in all schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1983; Lomotey, 1989). These characteristics include a clear academic mission and focus, orderly environment, high time on task and frequent monitoring of student progress.

**Summary on Principal's Administration of Discipline**

Research on the principalship suggests that the leadership role that the principal adopts does make a difference in determining school outcomes. Administrators play a crucial role in contributing to the creation of an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning. Schools that heighten student and staff involvement may decrease the occurrence of discipline problems. Student participation in school activities strongly relates to student commitment to schools (Short, Short, & Blanton 1994). Activities that increase status, visibility, recognition, and group cohesiveness may decrease student alienation. Students want to be a part of schools that solicit their involvement and input. Negative student behaviors seem to decrease in schools in which the principal and the faculty have created a conducive environment to student belongingness and involvement.

The administrators, in setting and pursuing goals for the school, largely determine the discipline structure of the school. The principal's ability to initiate and maintain a structure of order in the school is critical to the establishment of a school environment that is conducive to learning (Wu et al., 1982).
The Principal's Administration of Suspensions

Suspensions are used by principals as a control mechanism for discipline. In predominantly African-American low socioeconomic urban schools the numbers of suspensions and dropouts are alarming (Carnegie Commission, 1988). I define suspension as a process by which principals remove a student from classroom or from school for a temporary period of time. There are two types of suspensions that are common in public schools—in school and out-of-school suspensions. Both involve the removal of students from the learning environment. In in-school suspension, the student is placed in a learning environment with total isolation from his peers. It is assumed that the in-school suspension program will have a positive effect on the students' general school attitude and behavior and help students who are far behind on their academic studies (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985).

Rossow (1989) points out that out-of-school suspensions involve sending a student away from the school premises for a period of time. Incidents involving vandalism, drug distribution, arson and chronic fighting have no place in the public schools, and may require outside help during suspension or expulsion. Suspensions and expulsions serve as the last resort to protect other students, staff, and school property, and ensure an orderly and effective learning environment (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985). Wu, Pink, Crain, and Moore (1982) used the Safe School Study to look at the relationship between suspensions and the way schools organize and operate disciplinary activities (control structure). They recognized that schools differ in the degree to which discretionary authority is delegated to teachers in disciplinary
matters. Using teachers' responses from the Safe School Study, the researchers found that a high degree of suspension was positively correlated with a high degree of perceived administrative centralization of discipline. They went on to indicate that a high rate of suspension was not a desirable outcome as an indication of effective control structure.

In order to demonstrate the negative effect of a high suspension rate, the researchers constructed a Good Governance Scale which consisted primarily of students' perceptions of a school's disciplinary practices. Well-governed schools were schools that did not suspend students frequently. Students in those schools perceived principals to be firm and fair. Schools that had high suspension rates appeared to indicate that less severe control mechanisms had failed drastically.

In an effort to understand the school factors affecting rates of suspension, Bickel and Qualls (1980) selected four high-suspension and four low-suspension secondary schools in Jefferson County (Kentucky) School District. Classroom observations were conducted, and questionnaires were administered to students and staff members. Data analysis indicated that several organizational factors discriminated between low and high suspension schools. Regarding leadership, administrators in schools with few disciplinary problems were more visible around the school. Their presence had a positive impact on staff morale and student behavior. Schools with low levels of disciplinary problems appeared to be more positive environments, characterized by greater concern for human relations and mutual respect between faculty and students. The study had a methodological flaw.
since observers were cognizant of the fact that schools in the study differed in suspension rates before observation data were collected, a fact that might have created bias.

Boyer (1983) notes that research over the past several decades suggests that small schools provide greater opportunity for student participation and greater emotional support than larger ones. He acknowledges that it is difficult to know the exact point at which a high school becomes too large. He proposes that schools with an enrollment of between 1,500 to 2,000 students could be reorganized into smaller schools. Large schools are usually difficult to manage. They are also characterized with discipline challenges and high suspension rates. The size of the school cannot be ignored when studying student suspension.

Ciolfi (1994) conducted a study to describe the leadership styles of secondary school principals in central Florida high school districts. The study was also developed to determine if the leadership styles of those principals affected student suspensions. Ciolfi examined the possible effect school size might have on suspension. He attempted to ascertain if the principals' perceived styles affected the suspensions or if both styles and school size affected suspension. Ciolfi indicated a significant relationship between school size and suspension. Significance was also determined in the association between directive style and suspensions. School size contributed to ethnic group suspensions as well. African-American student data were significant in small and medium-size schools; white student suspensions were significant in large schools. While the findings of this study are consistent with other
studies regarding significance of suspension in larger schools, it differs from other studies in that the suspension of black students was not significant in larger schools. Most studies indicate that suspension of black students is significant in all schools (Carnegie, 1988).

Uchitelle, Bartz, and Hillman (1989) pointed out that suspension is used to discriminate against black students. The number of suspended black students is disproportionally high nationally in comparison to that of white students. It can be argued that the teachers, who seem to judge what offenses should lead to suspension, use their culture as the frame of reference to determine what is deemed as appropriate or inappropriate behavior.

The meaning of terms such as good or appropriate behavior seems self-evident. However, this is not necessarily the case, and definitional differences, and the value judgements underlying them, are one important source of whatever discipline problems schools confront (Englehard, 1986). For example, there are certain behaviors that may be normal for African-American students but if judged from the European American's frame of reference would be termed as inappropriate. The relevant judgements about what is good or bad discipline are made by many persons and institutions, ranging from individual classroom teachers through school systems to parents or administrators. Good leaders need to be able to identify their own cultural biases (Banks and Banks, 1993).

Moore and Cooper (1984) points out that historically, punishment and suspension or even suspension alone have been the most common techniques for
handling serious discipline challenges in schools. It seems that these practices are still widely used in U.S. schools today.

Although suspension is widely used, there is little evidence that suspension is by itself educative (Purkey, 1990). Indeed, suspension deprives educative opportunity for many students who need it. Moreover, suspension can be inherently rewarding, a vacation from a setting that the student is likely to find aversive. Under such circumstances, little long-term effectiveness can be expected from suspension. It is frequently argued that suspension or expulsion makes a good school more orderly and effective for the rest of the students who suffer from a disruptive environment. Unfortunately, little systematic research supports or refutes that hypothesis.

Studies of suspension in Cleveland (Stevens, 1983) indicate that there is wide variation across schools in suspension rates. In the Philadelphia study, it was found that schools with low suspension rates had a high level of community involvement, emphasized instruction rather than control, and had a student-centered environment. In schools that had high suspension rates, suspensions were used as a means of bringing parents into the school, and school administrators concentrated primarily on standards and control rather than on instructional matters.

Research conducted in 15 Indiana high schools in 1981 found that 71% of the principals were able to list all the rights granted to students in short suspension; while only 30% of teachers and counselors could (Hillman, 1985). As might be expected, principals were also more informed about expulsion cases, since they were also more
likely to have firsthand experience with them. About two-thirds of the teachers and administrators felt that procedural rules governing discipline imposed restraints on their actions (Teitelbaum, 1983).

Uchitelle, Bartz, and Hillman (1989) state that students who are suspended repeatedly in elementary grades are 12 times more likely to experience multiple suspensions in middle grades than students without such a record. In addition, suspensions are also predictors of students dropping out of school.

Absenteeism and suspension lead to school dropouts for many African-American students and principals need to understand this. I define dropouts as students leaving school before graduation and not enrolling in another institution of learning. Dropout rate is determined by subtracting the number of graduates from the number of students who were enrolled in a particular grade (Kronick & Hargis, 1990). Some children will be disruptive because they do not want to remain in school. Many of these students are in school because they are not of legal age for dropping out or because of parental pressure (Johnson & Johnson, 1990).

According to Garibaldi and Bartley (1989), African-American dropout rates in some large city school districts are more than 50%. More African-American males drop out of school than African-American females. Poor class attendance, suspension or expulsion due to discipline problems eventually lead to dropping out. The dropout rates are higher among African-Americans, Hispanics and economically disadvantaged youth. Fine (1991) found that reasons African-American males dropped out of school were dislike for school, expulsion, suspensions or desire to
work. Administration and school organization cannot evade the blame for turning off African-American students from school.

Summary on Principal’s Administration of Suspensions

Principals use suspensions in many schools today although there is no empirical support that they minimize discipline problems (Duke, 1990). Suspensions are predictors of students dropping out of school.

Conceptual Framework

In addressing research questions, I used the model shown in Figure 2.1 to indicate the relationship between the role of the principal and the level of suspensions in schools. The emphasis is not on causality as this is a descriptive and exploratory study. Researchers have suggested a relationship between principal leadership and the level of suspensions (Wu, et al. 1982).

Principal leadership can be defined as the way the principal manages, directs and coordinates tasks related to school activities in different situations and circumstances (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Students’ gender, students’ race and students’ socioeconomic background lead to principal’s behavior with regard to suspension. The size of the school and its location as well as the diversity of students play a big part in determining principal’s leadership (Carnegie Report, 1988).

As a manager the principal should use his or her professional knowledge and skills to foster an atmosphere where all children can learn. The principal, with
Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework
Conceptual Framework depicting a relationship among principal behavior, school climate, teacher attitudes and behaviors and their impact on suspension.
* This refers to the principals' behavior as it relates to discipline.

As a manager the principal should use his or her professional knowledge and skills to foster an atmosphere where all children can learn. The principal, with consensus of the staff, must develop a comprehensive school wide discipline program and continually reassess the strategies in use in order to evaluate their effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 1990).

The leadership style of the principal in turn affects the school climate. School climate can be defined as the general atmosphere in the school. School climate affects the entire school organization which involves the central office, teachers, students, parents and community at large. School climate may facilitate or hinder the principal from performing her/his work successfully.
There is a reciprocal interaction between school climate and teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Attitudes and behaviors can be defined as the beliefs teachers hold and the way those beliefs guide their behaviors. The way teachers handle discipline has influence on the way the students behave and respond to them. Teachers with different discipline philosophies also differ in their identification of their choice of strategies to deal with them (Glickman & Tamasharo, 1980).

Some teachers favor handling problem behaviors with control mechanisms such as punishment and suspensions. In contrast teachers with a humanistic approach identify few types of behavior as problematic. They believe that given the right condition, students want to and can improve their behavior. Teachers’ attitudes and behaviors influence the quality of suspensions in a school. Irving (1992) noted that teachers’ attitudes and the achievement of outcomes seem to be interconnected. How teachers formed attitudes and how these attitudes were communicated to students, however, were not investigated in this study.

Johnson and Johnson (1990) indicate that effective principals develop preventive measures even before suspension may be warranted by not only involving the staff but also parents and the community at large. The most critical leadership role of principals in schools is to clearly develop the school's goals, successfully encourage all staff to work harmoniously at attaining the set goals, and bring about a two-way communication system between themselves and the faculty members (Lomotey, 1989).
The findings of the Safe School Study (Wu et al., 1982) suggest that suspension is significant in schools where there is a high degree of administrative centralization in discipline matters. The findings of the study also show a negative correlation between good governance in "good" schools and suspensions. There is reason to explore the existence of a relationship between principal leadership and suspension rates in a school. Good principals attempt to prevent suspension incidents before they occur.

**Summary of Conceptual Framework**

Principal's leadership is affected by students' gender, race and socioeconomic background. Principal's leadership affects school climate which affects teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Teachers attitudes and behaviors affect suspension rates.
The purpose of this study was to explore the role of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low student suspension rates. In order to accomplish this objective, I used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. I used quantitative methods in a survey of 65 principals in Louisiana. The qualitative methods helped in understanding strategies principals use in schools with low suspension rates.

The use of qualitative methods allows study participants to provide responses that reflect their particular frame of reference and language, and provides richer descriptions that complement the information gleaned by quantitative means. The use of quantitative and qualitative methods is one of the triangulation methods noted by Denzin (1994) and Patton (1990). This type of triangulation is valuable in that the biases or limitations of one method are compensated for by the other method.

In this study, I focused on principals’ perceptions of discipline in general and suspensions in particular in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates. I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do the perceptions of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates compare with the perceptions of other principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with regard to the use of suspensions?

2. What alternatives to suspensions do principals use in predominantly African-
American urban middle schools that have low suspension rates?

In the rest of this chapter, I describe the procedures that I used to conduct this study. These include sampling, instrumentation, data collection, validity and reliability, and data analysis. I also discuss the limitations of the study.

**Quantitative Methods**

**Sampling**

I obtained a list of 110 middle schools in seven urban school districts from the Louisiana Bureau of School Accountability of the Department of Education. These schools formed the population of the quantitative component of this study. Out of the total number of schools, 65 were identified as predominantly African-American. I identified these by examining the percentages of African-American students in the schools. For the purpose of this study, I define predominantly African-American schools as those with an African-American student population of 51% or greater.

I calculated the overall suspension rate for each school by averaging the number of suspensions for three years: 1992-1993, 1993-1994 and 1994-1995. I rank ordered schools starting at the top with schools with low suspension rates. I determined quartiles so that the first quartile represented schools with low suspension rates. The fourth quartile represented schools with high suspension rates. I was interested in schools in the first and fourth quartile for comparison purposes.

**Selection of Districts**

Louisiana has 66 school districts. Sixty-four districts are parish school districts, while two districts are incorporated within municipalities. In this study, I examine quantitative
data in the largest seven urban school districts in the state. Districts are classified as urban according to their proportion of residents. According to U.S. Census Bureau Data, 1991, an urbanized area contains at least 50,000 residents. For the purpose of this study, I determined an urban district as one that has more than 50% of its residents living in the central part of the city.

**Selection of Principals**

I drew the sample for the quantitative data from a population of 110 middle school principals in seven urban school districts in Louisiana. The principals had to have served in their present schools for at least three years. Out of the total number of principals, 65 met this criteria and were included in the sampling frame.

Of the 65 surveys mailed, 85% of the principals responded. I received the first responses at the middle of September, just a week after the surveys had been mailed. I conducted telephone follow-ups at the end of September, 1995.

**Instrumentation**

**The Survey**

The response format was a four point Likert type scale consistent with attitudinal techniques (Drew and Hardman, 1985) and consisted of 41 items, eight of which were demographic questions. I constructed a questionnaire to permit the participants to answer each question by circling an appropriate number. Strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree were the points represented on the scale. Scores close to four indicate the direction and the magnitude of principals' agreements with the statement while scores decreasing toward one show the
respondents' disagreement with the statement. I designed the survey to elicit information on the perception of the role of the principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools regarding the administration of discipline in general and suspensions in particular. I used a survey for three reasons: ease of administration, economy of time, and assurance of anonymity.

I designed the questionnaire items to measure four different components of principals' perceptions in four different sections. I designed two survey items to measure principals' general perception on school discipline. I designed items 3 to 20 to measure principals' perceptions of suspension and suspension policy and their impact on students, teachers, and administration. I designed items 21 to 23 to focus on preventive measures that principals should take to minimize discipline challenges that lead to suspensions. Three items focused on principals' perception of the strategies used to deal with discipline challenges. I designed the last 11 items of the instrument to measure how principals used suspension, the involvement of teachers and students in formulating school rules, and how suspension affected students and learning. Fine (1991) indicated that students who are often suspended, eventually drop out of school.

Out of the last 11 survey items, 5 were specifically designed to examine how principals use suspensions in their schools. The questions included involvement of parents, teachers and students in the formulation of school rules in an attempt to decrease suspensions as well as questions on administration of suspension and its impact on individual students.
I designed the last section of the survey to elicit demographic information.

The principals and assistant principals provided demographic information which I used in the data analysis. I first asked the principals to identify their gender. I also asked the principals and the assistant principals to indicate the number of years they had taught, based on the following ranges: 1 to 4, 5 to 10, 11 to 19 and 20 or more. In addition, I asked the principals and the assistant principals to state the number of years they were assistant principals (if they ever were), based on the following ranges: 1 to 4, 5 to 10, 11 to 19 and 20 or more. I asked the principals to indicate the number of years they had been in their present position, based on the following ranges: 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9 and 10 or more. In addition, I asked the principals and assistant the principals to indicate their ethnicity, based on the following categories: African-American, Hispanic, White and others. Next, I asked the principals to indicate the highest degree they have earned, based on the following scales: Bachelor’s, Master’s, Specialist’s and Doctorate. Lastly, I asked the principals to provide their school size, based on student enrollment. I used the following categories to describe the student population: less than 200, 200-400, 400-600, 600-800, 800 and above.

Topics covered in the survey included: (1) principal’s perception of discipline, (2) principal’s perception of suspension, (3) principal’s administration of discipline, and (4) principal’s administration of suspension. See example of the survey items in Table 3.1.
Data Collection

After getting the necessary information from the Louisiana State Department of Education regarding principals in predominantly African-American urban, middle schools, I distributed letters describing the study and a researcher-constructed survey to all principals in those schools. I mailed the survey instrument in the Fall of 1995, to the identified principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with a brief letter describing the study (See Appendix B) and a self-addressed stamped envelope. I mailed follow-up letters encouraging principals to respond within a three week period (Borg & Gall, 1989). In addition, I made follow-up telephone calls.

Table 3.1. Examples of Survey Items

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Note: SA=Strongly Agree AG=Agree DI=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

Validity and Reliability

I developed my own instrument since I could not find any appropriate survey on suspension with established reliability and validity ratings. Because of the length of time it takes to establish reliability and reliability, I requested members of doctoral committee to allow me to use the instrument due to time constraints. Before administering it, I gave the instrument to experts to ensure the survey
questions had content validity. Items were analyzed by ten active principals, assistant principals and three administrators to ensure content validity (Borg & Gall, 1985). The scale items were analyzed for clarity and focus, with the respondents providing written and verbal feedback. In order for each item to represent only a single idea, the wording of some scale items were modified and simplified from the original scale.

**Data Analysis**

I used a variety of data analyses techniques on the questionnaire responses and demographic information forms received. I used descriptive statistical analysis of the principal's characteristics and their responses to the suspension questionnaire items. The first step in the quantitative analysis was to run a descriptive statistical analyses in order to show how principals responded to various test items. Included in the descriptive statistics are frequencies which show the number of principals that responded at each level of the Likert scale, the percentages of principals' responses in each item and the maximum possible score in the form of means and standard deviations.

I also conducted Student's *t*-tests for all items in order to compare the top and the bottom group. I hoped the comparison might indicate what principals in the two categories of schools do differently in regard to the administration of suspensions. Specifically my hypotheses were:

1. There is a significant difference in perception of the use of school discipline between principals in schools with low suspension rates and their counterparts in schools with high suspension rates.
2. There is a significant difference in perception of principal’s use of suspension between principals in schools with low suspension rates as compared with principals in schools with high suspension rates.

I conducted exploratory ancillary analyses by running MANOVA which helped me to compare and evaluate if there were differences in the way principals from various demographic levels responded to each construct. I also ran a series of exploratory ANOVAs analyzing the effect of the demographic variables on survey items and also to determine the overall pattern of responses to the survey items. Through this process, I was able to examine how principals, at various demographic levels, responded to each survey item. I was also able to gain insight into how they perceived suspension.

I classified all the survey items, grouped them logically according to their content and developed four constructs. The four constructs are: Policy Implementation, Orderly Environment, Preventive Measure and Gender Environment. These four constructs are directly related to the four main themes under discussion in this study. My objective was to examine whether there was a significant difference between groups and construct levels identified through logical classification. In order to examine the four dependent variables simultaneously and see their overall effect, I performed MANOVA by running dependent variables (constructs) against (demographic items) independent variables. I performed Scheffe under MANOVA for group comparison. I used multiple comparison procedures in order to identify which levels were significantly different.
Qualitative Methods

The second part of the study involved case studies of four principals and four assistant principals in schools with low suspension rates. The four principals and assistant principals were selected from schools with the lowest rate of suspensions. I conducted this component of the study in the Fall semester of the 1995-1996 school year.

Sampling

The selection of principals and assistant principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates was based on homogeneous sampling technique which focuses on describing a particular group or subgroup in depth (Patton, 1990). Four principals and assistant principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with the lowest rates of suspension were selected for the qualitative part of this study. Only principals and assistant principals who had been in their present positions for at least three years were eligible for case studies. The rationale for the selection of principals and assistant principals in schools with low suspension rates is that we can learn more positive information from principals in schools with low suspension rates than we can from those in schools with high suspension rates.

Letters were sent to the central office requesting permission to contact the school principals. Once permission was granted, each principal and assistant principal was contacted by telephone to schedule times for interviews for each principal and assistant principal. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. As a follow up to the telephone conversation, letters were mailed to the principals in the Fall semester which described the study and confirmed the interview time.
Data Sources

Information about the case study participants and their schools was collected through direct observation, personal interviews and documents analysis. The qualitative data were gathered through interview techniques and direct observation. A tape recorder was used during the interview process if the participant did not object.

Interviews

Fetterman (1989) describes interviewing as the most important data collection technique that is at the disposal of a researcher. Interviews enable a researcher to find out information like feelings and thoughts and intentions that cannot be directly observed. I used the Interview Guide Approach (Patton, 1990). This approach provides a framework to help make the interviewing process systematic, while still allowing for some flexibility.

Interviews were the primary method of data collection in the qualitative component of this study. In an attempt to address research questions, interviews were conducted using a predetermined set of questions (See Appendix C). The questions were developed to provide information in the following areas: school discipline, suspensions, principal and school discipline and principal's use of suspensions.

Semi-structured, open-ended questions rather than questions limited by stated alternatives or implied boundaries were used because they encourage a free response from the participants. The distinguishing characteristic of open-ended questions is that they raise an issue but do not provide any structure for the participants to reply; the participant is provided with an opportunity to answer from his or her own frame of reference. Such questions are particularly important when the issue is complex, relevant dimensions are
relevant dimensions are unknown, or the interest of the researcher lies in the
description of the phenomenon, the exploration of a process, or the individual's
formation of an issue. They are especially useful for eliciting unanticipated responses
and unique perspectives (Gatz & Hoagland, 1979). Each principal and assistant
principal was interviewed twice during the semester. Based on the responses to the
initial questions, follow-up questions or probes were explored. According to
Spradley (1980), probes or follow-up questions are important in an interview to
clarify the initial questions and to provide an alternative answer to a question.
Interviews were tape recorded to allow for review and editing of the data. The
following are examples of interview questions:

1. Describe yourself as an educational leader.
2. Tell me how you got into education.
3. Tell me how you got into administration.
4. What strategies do you use to address discipline challenges in your school?
5. What do you like or dislike about your school's suspension policy?
6. What is your view on suspension rates?

Topics and issues to be covered during the interviews were specified in
advance, in outline form. Here, I decided the sequence and the wording of the
questions in the course of the interview. The outline increases the
comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for
each respondent. Logical gaps in the data were anticipated and closed.
Observation

In an effort to closely examine how principals deal with suspension and what alternative strategies to suspensions they use, a four-day observation was conducted at each of the four schools. Observations form a "funnel progressively narrowing and directing a researcher's attention deeper into the elements of the settings that have emerged as theoretically and/or empirically essential" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p.381). The initial observations were broad "descriptive observations" (Spradley, 1980, p. 33). These observations were unfocused, and the main objective was to provide a base to branch out in myriad future directions (Adler and Adler, 1994.)

Specifically, I observed the procedures principals and assistant principals follow in their daily routine. Notes were reviewed between appointments with the principals. I spent approximately five hours each day in each site for the four days of observation. I shadowed the principal in his or her day-to-day administrative tasks. As I became more familiar with the setting, certain features within the scene increasingly became of interest and pertinent to the problem under study. On the second day at each site, I made focused observations (Spradley, 1980, p.33). I gave attention to "deeper and narrow portions of people, events, behavior, feelings, structures, and process" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p 381).

I developed grand-tour observation questions in order to record as much information as possible about the social scene (Spradley, 1980) during the first visit in each school. Grand-tour observations are observations that do not have any specific focus. The grand-tour questions that guided these observations were: (1)
What strategies do principals use in dealing with student discipline problems? (2)

What alternative strategies to suspensions do principals use to deal with discipline challenges? The following are examples of my guided mini-tour observation questions:

a. How does the principal relate to teachers?

b. How does the principal relate to students?

c. What alternative strategies does the principal use to deal with students who violate school rules?

d. Do the students behave differently in the presence of the principal than they do in the presence of teachers?

I recorded longhand information gathered during the observations. Using a tape recorder, I recorded general impressions of the school on the way to and from school. At the end of each day of observation, I transcribed data using a word processing program to aid later coding. I recorded additional information that was recalled from the school visit along with the original data while entering the data into the word processing program.

Validity and Reliability

Patton (1990) indicates that as the internal control over the environment increases, the ability to generalize decreases. External validity refers to the degree to which findings can be generalized to the population from which the sample was drawn (Borg and Gall, 1989). Qualitative research examines a research area holistically in order to gain a better understanding of the problem. While expansion
of the scope of a study increases generalizability and comparability, in-depth analysis of a smaller group also adds deeper meaning to the comparison (Rist, 1982). According to Patton (1990), qualitative methods are used to gather data on any number of aspects of the setting to put together a complete picture of the problem area.

An important concern when analyzing qualitative data is "how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an investigation are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 221). Criteria for trustworthiness include: credibility, (i.e., the constructions arrived at are credible to the respondents), transferability, (i.e., the reporting of results considers change over time), and confirmability (i.e., the data can be confirmed by someone other than the inquirer). Mechanisms for meeting the criteria for trustworthiness are described below.

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited triangulation as one of the mechanisms for establishing credibility. Triangulation is a technique for judging the accuracy of data, and requires the use of multiple data sources and/or multiple methods of data collection. In this study I used triangulation to establish credibility by using interviews, observations and documents to collect data.

**Transferability**

To address the issue of transferability, the researcher must demonstrate the degree of similarities between the sending (i.e., the setting of the study) and the
receiving (i.e., the setting to which the study may be applied) contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, he or she must provide a thick description (description with both denotative and connotative meaning) of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and hence which determined the transferability of the study. Thick description entails the broadest and most thorough information possible (Greetz, 1973). In reporting the findings and conclusions of the study, I provided as accurate a description of the setting and participants as concern for dependability allowed, as well as extensive discussion of themes which emerged, including statements from which they were derived.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

In order to meet the criteria for dependability, the investigator must provide evidence of the appropriateness of all the decisions he or she makes throughout the study (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability of data is demonstrated by showing that the findings are based on data and the inferences drawn from the data are logical. Dependability and confirmability can be established by means of an audit, in which an external auditor examines both the process and product of the study. During the study, I worked closely with Drs. Lomotey and Teddlie who examined the process and product of my research work. In addition, two graduate students accompanied me throughout the period of observation. This provided inter-rater reliability for we were able to cross validate the data. In this study, I tape recorded and later transcribed the exact words the respondents used and encouraged them to read and comment upon the case studies once completed.
Spradley (1980) points out that validity of a qualitative study can be increased by writing down the exact words used by participants and also by letting the participants read and comment upon the case study once it is completed. Also, triangulation, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, will help to improve the internal validity. Yin (1993) points out that researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgements by collecting different kinds of data involving the same phenomenon. Not only did the complementary methods lead to more valid results, they also captured a more complete or holistic portrayal of the phenomena under study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that qualitative research is an art with uncertain reliability. Since reliability refers to the replication of studies, it is impossible to demonstrate reliability in qualitative studies. Human behavior is unpredictable and not static; events cannot be replicated exactly as they were originally observed (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984). Miles and Huberman (1994) give suggestions to researchers to aid in their quest to improve reliability of their studies. They point out that researchers should be familiar with the phenomenon being investigated, have strong conceptual interests, and use a multidisciplinary approach and good investigation skills.

Hensen (1979) indicated that reliability in ethnographic research is dependent on the resolution of both external and internal design problems. External reliability is the ability of independent researchers to discover the same phenomena when studying the same or similar settings. In qualitative studies, therefore, external reliability would be most difficult to demonstrate. Bogdan and Bilken (1982) had a
different opinion from Hensen. They felt two researchers studying the same event might see different things and reach different conclusions. Bogdan and Bilken (1982) suggest that both studies would be reliable as long as the results are incompatible.

Internal reliability is the degree to which the sets of meanings held by multiple observers are similar so that they describe phenomena in the same way and arrive at the same conclusion about them. Since I am the only researcher in this study, internal reliability is not an issue. However, I tape recorded interviews so that my conclusions can be assessed by other researchers.

Dawson (1978) believes that a familiar relationship between participants and observers may bring about more honest, complete responses than those generated by more distant relationships. Since I had familiarized myself with the four principals during the observational and interview process, I hoped they were more comfortable and accepted my presence.

**Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Data obtained from the qualitative method were analyzed using techniques consistent with the strategies outlined in Spradley (1980) and Patton (1990). Domain analysis was used to identify the patterns that emerged from the interviews. Domain analysis is a procedure for analyzing written transcripts and identifying categories or domains in order to understand the world of the person being studied (Spradley, 1980). Identified patterns were transferred from field notes to a domain analysis work sheet. New patterns or extensions to old patterns were added during the observations.
Patton (1990) argues that the use of categories is a good way for a beginning researcher to attempt data analysis, since similarities and differences between cases can easily be identified. I drew and completed a summary sheet for each interview so data could be readily accessible. I also replayed the audiotape of the interview and transcribed the information given by the interviewee that I considered pertinent and enriching to the study.

The analysis of observation and interview data provides an overall picture of strategies principals and assistant principals use to address discipline challenges. As the field notes were entered into a word processing program, data were organized to fit into emerging categories (Spradley, 1980).

A taxonomic analysis was made during the last week of the study (Spradley, 1980). A taxonomy is a set of categories that are organized on the basis of single relationships. Taxonomic analysis was used to verify initial observations and interviews, and at the same time, I was looking for "deeper" relationships within domains. The taxonomic analysis was expected to reveal how identified patterns of behaviors were related to the whole. There relationships were the primary findings.

New categories or extensions to the observation data were written on the original domain and taxonomic analysis sheets. This allowed for easy comparison of observation and interview data. Documents like school log books, school annual reports, posters and bulletin boards in or around the office, communication from principal to parents, and memos from principal to teachers and parents were carefully examined and analyzed.
Limitations of the Study

This study involves principals and assistant principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools in Louisiana. The findings may only be extrapolated to the role of the principal in predominantly African-American urban middle schools in the larger population with extreme caution and tentativeness. The sample used in the quantitative part of this study consisted of only 65 principals. A small sample like the one used in the quantitative part of this study cannot be said to represent the larger population. Since this is an exploratory study, the results cannot be used to make meaningful generalizations. Conducting a national survey or one that would cover a number of states would circumvent this problem. Such a study could include interviewing teachers, students and parents in addition to interviewing principals.

Another limitation is possible inaccuracies in suspension rates that individual schools report to the central office. The data available from the Louisiana Department of Education may not tell the whole story of what is actually happening in schools. Many urban schools use in-school suspensions which are never reported to the central office. When principals are evaluated for promotions, the number of student suspensions in their schools is one of the factors considered. It is therefore likely that some principals may under report the number of suspensions in their schools. This problem could be addressed by interviewing teachers, parents and students. This might give one a different perspective.
The fact that I did not study a group of principals in schools with high suspension rates for comparison purposes is a limitation of this study. This can be overcome by conducting a study comparing principals in schools with low and those in schools with high suspension rates.

Another limitation in this study is the fact that different school districts in Louisiana measure suspension differently, which creates a problem when comparing them. This problem could be overcome if the state develops a standardized method for measuring suspension rates for the entire state.

Lack of reliability in the survey used for the quantitative part of this study is a limitation. A survey with established reliability specifically addressing suspension has not been used before. To establish reliability of any instrument requires administering the instrument to different groups. This requires more time and money than a dissertation study can often allow given the time and financial limitations of a doctoral student. Conducting a pilot study or administering the instrument to more groups would enable future researchers to establish the reliability of this instrument.

Lastly, the allocated time for observation and interviews for the case studies was less than ideal. To really understand the dynamics of principals and suspension rates, more time for observations and interviews would be required. As was indicated earlier, it is difficult to know the number of suspensions that are reported. An interdepartmental collaboration between the Louisiana Department of Education and Child Welfare could provide more information on suspensions. This would require more time for information gathering, observations, comparing and contrasting principals in schools with low suspension rates to principals in schools.
with high suspension rates, and interviewing parents, students and teachers than a dissertation study can usually allow given the time and financial constraints.
CHAPTER FOUR
Quantitative Research Results

The purpose for this research was to examine the role of the principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools that have low suspensions. In this chapter I present the results of the principals' responses concerning suspension in predominantly African-American urban middle schools. I provide descriptive statistics for each of the survey items. In addition, I provide a brief description of the survey instrument, the selection of school districts, the selection of principals, and the survey responses.

I classified the survey items into groups according to their content and derived four different constructs: Policy Implementation, Orderly Environment, Preventive Measures, and Gender/Environment. I also used t-tests for the tests of hypothesis and to compare the responses of the principals in schools with low suspension rates with the responses of the principals in schools that had high suspension rates.

To further explore the data, I used ancillary analysis. I used MANOVAs to compare and evaluate if there were differences in the way principals from various demographic levels vary in their perceptions of each construct. The analysis revealed differences in the principals' perceptions due to certain demographic characteristics. In order to obtain an overall pattern of responses to the survey items, I ran a series of exploratory ANOVAs analyzing the effect of demographic variables on the survey items.
**Descriptive Statistics**

In the first section, I provide the descriptive statistics for the survey which utilizes four point Likert type items (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree). I did not have a midpoint on the scale in order to force the respondents to make a choice instead of selecting a neutral response. This section includes descriptions of the frequencies, corresponding percentages, means and standard deviations for each item.

The first step in the quantitative analysis was to run descriptive statistics in order to show how principals responded to each of the survey items. Included in the descriptive statistics are frequencies, which show the number of principals that responded at each level of the Likert type scale, and the percentage of principals' responses for each item.

**Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

The respondents in this study had different characteristics which may have influenced the way they responded to various survey items. Out of the 54 principals who took part in this study, 55.60% (30) were white and 44.60% (24) were African-American. The principals varied in their level of education. Of the 54 principals, 3.80% (2) had bachelor's degrees, 69.80% (37) master's degrees, 18.90% (11) specialist's degrees and 7.5% (4) doctoral degrees. The principals also had different teaching experiences. Out of the 54 principals, 11.30% (6) taught for 5-10 years, 24.50% (13) taught for 11 to 19 years and 64.20% (35) taught for more than 20 years.
The respondents varied in the number of years they served as assistant principals. Out of the 54 principals included in this study, 64.80% (35) had served as assistant principals for 4 to 10 years and 35.20% (19) had served as assistant principals for 11 or more years.

The principals differed in the total number of years they had been principals. Of the 54 principals who took part in this study 35.20% (19) had been principals for a total of 1 to 4 years, 38.90% (21) had been principals for a total of 5-10 years and 25.90% (14) had been principals for a total of 11 years or more.

The principals in this study differed in the number of years they had served as principals in the same school. Of the 54 principals, 42.60% (23) had been in the principalship in the same school for 1 to 4 years, 39.90% (21) had been principals in the same school for 5 to 10 years, 11.10% (10) had served as principals in the same schools for 11 and more years.

The principals came from schools with different student populations. Out of the 54 principals, 33.30% (18) were in schools with 200 or less students, 38.90% (21) were in schools with 600 to 800 students and 27.80% (15) were in schools with 800 students or more. Demographic data are displayed in Table 4.1.

The Survey

The response format was a four-point Likert type scale that was constructed using established psychometric techniques. I chose the four-point scale in order to force respondents to make a decision instead of choosing the neutral position, which is common when individuals respond to a five-point Likert scale.
Table 4.1. Summary for Demographic Characteristics of the 54 Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>68.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>69.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>07.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>11.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - or more</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as Assistant Principal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as Principal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years as Principal in the Same School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 - 600</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 - 800</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 or more</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Drew and Hardman, 1985). The scale consisted of 41 items, eight of which were demographic questions. I constructed the questionnaire to permit the participants to answer each question by circling an appropriate number that corresponded to: strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. I designed the survey to elicit the perception of the role of the principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools regarding the administration of discipline in general and suspensions in particular. (See Appendix A). I designed the survey items to measure four different components of principals' perceptions in four different sections, which included principal's perception of discipline, principal's perception of suspension, principals' administration of discipline and principals' administration of suspension. I designed the first three survey items to measure principals' general perception on school discipline. Items 3-20 were designed to measure principals' perceptions of suspension and suspension policy and their impact on students, teachers and administrators.

I designed items 21-23 to focus on preventive measures that principals should take to minimize discipline challenges that lead to suspensions. Three items focused on the principals' perception of the strategies used to deal with discipline challenges. I designed the last 11 items of the instrument to measure how principals use suspension, the involvement of parents, teachers and students in formulation of school rules and how suspension affected students' learning. I designed the last section of the survey to elicit demographic information from the principals.
Selection of Districts

The state has 66 school districts. Sixty-four districts are parish school districts, while two districts are incorporated within municipalities. This study examines quantitative data in the largest seven urban school districts in the state. Districts are classified as urban according to their proportion of residents. According to the 1990 U.S. Census Bureau Data (1991), an urbanized area contains at least 50,000 residents. For the purpose of this study, a district that has more than 50% of its residents living in such an area is determined to be urban.

Selection of Principals

I drew the sample for the quantitative data from a population of 110 urban middle school principals in seven urban school districts within Louisiana. In order to qualify as a principal, the school had to have an African-American student population of 51% or more. In addition, principals had to have served in their present schools for at least three years. Out of the 110 principals, 65 met this criteria and were included in the sampling frame.

Survey Response

I distributed the survey instrument in the mail with self-addressed stamped envelopes to the 65 principals selected. Out of 65 principals, 54 (85%) returned their completed surveys. Different codes were used to identify the principals and the school districts from which they had come. I received the first responses during the middle of September, one week after the surveys had been mailed. I conducted telephone follow-ups for those principals who had not responded by the first week of
October and received their responses by the end of November 1995.

**Descriptive Statistics for the Survey Items**

The analysis of survey items revealed that 54 of the principals (100%) who responded regarded good leadership as a critical ingredient to effectively address disciplinary challenges. Fifty of the principals (92.60%) felt that "every school should possess a manual that clearly explains offenses warranting suspension" because such a manual would remove "gray" areas regarding discipline, thereby making implementation easier at the local school level. The remaining four principals (7.40%) disagreed with this statement.

Thirty-two of the principals (59.30%) agreed that "bureaucratic procedure hampered policy implementation", while 22 (40.70%) disagreed with the statement. Thirty-eight of the principals (70.40%) agreed with the statement that "suspensions could lead to litigation." Sixteen of the principals (29.60%) refuted the statement that suspension could lead to litigation.

Forty-four of the principals (81.50%) indicated that "The existing district suspension policy was difficult to implement due to inadequate clarification and needed to be changed so that it could address the particular needs of each school." Ten principals (18.50%) disagreed with this statement.

Concerning the way in which suspensions are administered, 81.40% of the principals indicated that the administering of suspensions could be influenced by the student's race and socioeconomic background. However, ten of the principals (18.50%) refuted that statement.

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Twenty-nine of the principals (53.70%) indicated that suspensions were necessary because they served as a deterrent to other students who might otherwise misbehave. Twenty-five principals (46.30%) disagreed. Despite this, 47 (87%) of the principals agreed that suspension was not the best and most effective response for dealing with disciplinary challenges. These principals felt that other approaches to suspension (e.g. detention and counseling) could serve as more viable options. Furthermore, 49 of the principals (90.74%) indicated that the involvement of parents in school activities and decision making processes could act as a deterrent to disciplinary challenges. Five principals (9.30%) disagreed with the statement that involvement of parents in school activities and decision making could act as a deterrent to disciplinary challenges.

Forty-nine of the principals (90.74%) preferred in-school suspension to out-of-school suspension. Five principals (9.26%) disagreed. Table 4.2 represents percentages of principals agreement and disagreement with the statements for each survey item.

Classification of Survey Items

I did not perform a factor analysis to generate groups of items because the sample was too small to allow for such analysis. However, when I examined the survey items I found that certain items focused on the same content. Therefore, I arranged all the survey items, classified them and put them under four different
Table 4.2. Summary for Descriptive Statistics of Item 1 to Item 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leadership is critical</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Discipline challenges prevention</td>
<td>96.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suspensions are helpful</td>
<td>88.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Need for a written policy</td>
<td>92.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Suspension policy modification</td>
<td>74.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Policy manual is necessary</td>
<td>90.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Suspension linked to litigation</td>
<td>70.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Existing policy and bureaucracy</td>
<td>59.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Race could influence</td>
<td>81.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Background could influence</td>
<td>51.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Suspension and dislike for school</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Suspension not the best response</td>
<td>87.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Warning to others</td>
<td>53.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Involvement of parents</td>
<td>90.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Principal and implement</td>
<td>72.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Suspension policy and change</td>
<td>81.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Alternative learning centers</td>
<td>74.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Student government as safety valves</td>
<td>48.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Each school develop its policy</td>
<td>68.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Policy failure to address</td>
<td>77.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Principal and disciplinary measures</td>
<td>62.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Principal availability in school</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Principal and teachers support</td>
<td>82.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Suspension and disciplinary challenges</td>
<td>66.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Involvement of teachers and students</td>
<td>74.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Males suspended longer than females</td>
<td>68.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Suspension does more harm than good</td>
<td>72.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Suspension should be used with caution</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Destruction of property</td>
<td>68.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Racial discrimination in suspension</td>
<td>79.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Principal alone should suspend</td>
<td>77.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Contract with students is critical</td>
<td>77.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>In-school suspension is helpful</td>
<td>68.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentage of agreement is based on the number of individuals who marked strongly agree and agree.
constructs: Preventive Measures (PM), Policy Implementation (PI), Orderly Environment (OE), and Gender/Environment (GE). I define these four constructs below.

1. Preventive Measures are the steps principals and teachers take to ensure that discipline challenges are minimized as much as possible in a school. Such measures may range from verbal reprimand to expulsion. For example, “Good leadership can best address disciplinary challenges before they occur.” The preventive measures categories consisted of items 1, 14, 17, 23, 25 and 33.

2. Policy Implementation are redundancies, misinterpretations, or obscurities that principals face in their administration of district suspension policies. For example, “Suspension policy should be modified to fit the particular needs of individual schools.” Policy implementation is reflected in items 8, 15 and 20.

3. Orderly Environment is an environment which is perceived by teachers and administrators to have few disciplinary challenges. In such an environment, students generally obey and adhere to school rules and regulations. For example, “In order for learning to take place, disciplinary challenges should be minimized as much as possible.” Orderly environment statements were items 2, 6, 23, 18 and 33.

4. Gender/Environment refers to the atmosphere in which preferential treatment is portrayed by principals and/or teachers in the administration of suspension between boys and girls. For example, “Suspensions of males are generally longer than that of their female counterparts.” Gender/environment issues were items 9, 19, 26 and 30.
Tests of Hypothesis

t-tests

I calculated the overall suspension rate for each school by averaging the number of suspensions for three years; 1992-1993, 1993-1994 and 1994-1995. I rank ordered schools starting at the top with schools with low suspension rates. I determined quartiles so that the first quartile represented the schools with low suspension rates. I was interested in schools in the first and fourth quartile for comparison purposes. The first quartile was composed of 13 middle schools that had low suspension rates while the fourth quartile had 14 schools with high suspension rates. My first hypothesis was:

There is a significant difference in perception of the use of school discipline between principals in schools with low suspension rates and their counterparts in schools with high suspension rates.

On testing this hypothesis, I found there was no significant difference $t(26) = 1.15; p < .05$ between the two groups on the item assessing principal's perception on suspension policy. My second hypothesis was on an item assessing perception of discipline.

There is a significant difference in perception of the principal's use of suspension between principals in schools with low suspension rates as compared to those in schools with high suspension rates.

I conducted t-tests comparing the responses of principals in schools with low suspension rates and principals in schools with high suspension rates, to test the
hypotheses of the study. Results of the t-test analysis revealed a difference between the two groups, t (26)=2.45, p<.05). This is item number 16 of the survey. (See appendix A).

The sample means for this items are displayed in Table 4.3. The respondents in the low suspension rates group scored higher than the respondents in the high suspension rate group on the item that stated “Suspension should be used with caution since they can be a reinforcement to students who do not want to be in school.” The mean for the group with low suspension rates is lower (3.69 with a standard deviation of .63) while the mean for the group with high suspension rates is higher (3.93 with a standard deviation of .27). Principals in the low suspension rate group disagreed more with the statement, while those principals in the high suspension rate group agreed more with this statement. The mean difference between the two groups is small but significant.

Table 4.3. Summary for t-tests for Low and High Suspension Rate Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Pro &gt; F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Suspension Rate Group</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Suspension Rate Group</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Test of Hypotheses

When I tested the first hypothesis, there was no significant difference between the responses of principals in schools with low suspension rates and principals in schools with high suspension rates. However, when I tested the second hypothesis, I found a slight difference between principals in schools with low suspension rates and principals in schools with high suspension rates. Principals in schools with low
suspension rates scored higher than principals in schools with high suspension rates on the survey item that suggested that the existing suspension policy should be changed.

Ancillary Analyses

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

In order to examine the four dependent variables simultaneously, I first ran a series of MANOVAs using demographic variables as the independent variables and the four groups of survey items as dependent variables. Basically, I was interested in looking at the effects of demographic variables on the four constructs.

I used seven independent variables in this series of analyses which included: teaching experience, ethnicity, level of education, years as assistant principal, years as principal, years as principal in the same school and the school size. The results revealed that principals’ teaching experience, the number of years the respondents served as principal in the same school, ethnicity and the size of school they served, had significant effects on the survey items. These overall differences allowed further tests using ANOVA. MANOVA results for the effect of these four independent variables were significant and are presented in Table 4.4. For the purpose of this study, these multivariate results were based on Wilk’s Lambda and the F statistics derived from Wilk’s Lambda.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

I first ran a series of ANOVAs to determine the overall pattern of responses to the survey items and to explore the effects of the four independent variables on
the dependent variables. The four independent variables included: principals' years of teaching, principals' ethnicity, principals' years of service in the same school, and the school size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Wilk's Lambda Value</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F-Value</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td>0.6299</td>
<td>37.7839</td>
<td>2.9500</td>
<td>0.0414*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as Principal</td>
<td>0.6299</td>
<td>70.0559</td>
<td>1.9825</td>
<td>0.0311*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>0.5966</td>
<td>74.3728</td>
<td>3.5363</td>
<td>0.0013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Size</td>
<td>0.5771</td>
<td>68.5680</td>
<td>1.8219</td>
<td>0.0338*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significance level was at .05

Differences Due to Teaching Experience

The respondents' teaching experience affected the way they responded to the survey items. The results of analysis of variance revealed that the teaching experience significantly affected the way the principals responded to six of the survey items. The independent variable "teaching experience" had three levels from which the respondents had to choose one. The levels were: 5 to 10 years, 11 to 19 years and 20 or more years.

First, the years of teaching significantly affected \( F(1, 50) = 2.22; p < .05 \) the way the principals responded to the item, "Suspensions are helpful to students." Respondents who had taught for 5 to 10 years made more positive responses than principals who had taught for 20 or more years.
Second, there was a significant difference \( F(1, 50) = 3.00; p < .05 \) in the way principals responded to the survey item, "Existing policies are full of bureaucratic procedures that make implementation difficult. Respondents who had taught for 5 to 10 years disagreed more with the statement than principals with teaching experience of 20 or more years.

Third, principals' teaching experience significantly \( F(1, 50) = 3.14; p < .05 \) affected their responses to the item, "Students who are suspended many times develop a dislike for school. The respondents with teaching experience of 5 to 10 years disagreed with this statement more than those who had taught for 20 or more years.

Fourth, the respondents' teaching experience had a significant effect \( F(1, 50) = 8.10; p < .05 \) in the way the principals responded to the item, "Principals find it difficult to implement suspension policies because students have due process rights." Respondents with 5 to 10 years of teaching experience gave more positive responses to this statement than principals with 20 or more years.

Fifth, principals' teaching experience significantly affected \( F(1, 50) = 4.57; p < .05 \) the way they responded to the item, "Student governments are good safety valves but should not have much influence on school suspension policy. Principals with teaching experience of 5 to 10 years agreed with this statement more than those who had taught for 20 or more years.

Sixth, teaching experience of the respondents had a significant effect \( F(1, 50) = 3.02; p < .05 \) and directly influenced the way they responded to the item, "

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Principal and teacher support of students' concerns can minimize students' suspensions.” Respondents with teaching experience of 5 to 10 years disagreed with this statement more than principals who had taught for 20 or more years. Means and standard deviations for each subgroups are summarized in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5. Summary for the Differences Due to Teaching Experience.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1 - 4 years</th>
<th>5 - 11 years</th>
<th>&gt; 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions are helpful</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing district policies</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension and dislike for</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and impl.</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student governments</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal support</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Differences Due to Ethnicity**

Overall, the analysis of variance results revealed that principals' ethnicity significantly affected the way they responded to five survey items. First, principals' ethnicity significantly affected [F (1, 50)=3.00 ; p<0.5] the way they responded to survey item which stated, “The existing district suspension policy is full of bureaucratic procedures that make it difficult to implement.” There were two levels under ethnicity from which the respondents had to select one. These were White and African-American. White principals disagreed with the statement more than the African-American principals.

Second, principals’ ethnicity had significant effects [F (1, 50)=3.14; p .05] in the way the principals responded to the item which stated that “Students who are
suspended may develop a dislike for school.” African-American principals made more positive responses than white principals.

Third, principals’ ethnicity significantly affected $[F(1, 50)=8.10; p < .05]$ the way they responded to survey item that stated, “The principals find it difficult to implement policies because students have due process rights.” White principals disagreed more with this statement than African-American principals.

Fourth, principals’ ethnicity had a significant effect $[F(1, 50)=4.57; p < .05]$ in the way they responded to the survey item which stated, “Student’ governments are good safety valves but should not have much influence on the school suspension policy.” White principals made more positive responses than African-American principals.

Fifth, principals’ ethnicity significantly affected $[F(1, 50)=3.02; p < .05]$ the way the principals responded to the survey item which stated, “Principal and teacher support of students’ concerns can minimize students’ suspensions.” White principals disagreed with the statement more than African-American principals.

Table 4.6 summarizes the means and the standard deviations of the differences due to ethnicity.

**Differences Due to Being Principal in the Same School**

There were three levels for the independent variable from which the respondents had to choose one. Overall, ANOVA results revealed for the effect of the number of years the respondents served as principal in the same school were
Table 4.6. Summary for the Differences Due to Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>White Principals</th>
<th>African-American Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing district policy</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension and dislike for</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Impl.</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>4.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student governments</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal support</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

significant in three dependent variables. First, the number of years the respondents had served as principal in the same school had a significant effect \[F (2, 51)=10.86; p < .05\] and influenced the way they perceived the dependent variable which stated, "A policy manual that clearly explains the offenses would be helpful." This item had three levels out of which the respondents had to select one. Respondents who served as principal in the same school for 1 to 4 years made more positive responses than principal who had served for 11 or more years.

Second, the number of years the respondents served as principals in the same school had a significant effect \[F (2, 51)=4.68; p < .05\] on the way the principals responded to the item, "Suspension may be influenced by students' background." Respondents who served as principal for 1 to 4 years disagreed more with this statement than respondents who had served as principal for 5 to 10 years.

Third, the analysis of variance results for the effect of the number of years the respondents served as principal was significant \[F (2, 51)=7.04; p < .05\] and directly influenced the way principals responded to the item, "There are racial
differences in the way suspensions are administered." The respondents who had served as principal in the same school for 5 to 10 years disagreed more with this statement than those who served as principals in the same school for 11 or more years. Table 4.7 summarizes the results.

Table 4.7. Summary for Differences Due to Years in the Same School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1-4 Years</th>
<th>5-10 Years</th>
<th>&gt;11 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A policy manual needed</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background influence</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race could influence</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences Due to School Size

ANOVA results for the effect of the size of the school was significant and influenced the way principals responded to three survey items. First, the size of the school in which the principal served had a significant effect [F (2, 48)=2.48; p <.05] on the way they responded to the item, “Suspension may be influenced by students’ background.” Respondents who served as principal in schools with a student population of 200 to 800 disagreed more with this statement than principals from schools with a student population of 800 or more.

Second, the size of the school significantly affected [F (2, 48)=2.97; p <.05] the way in which the principals responded to the item, “Suspensions are necessary because they serve as a warning to other students who might otherwise misbehave.” Respondents from schools with a student population of 200 to 600 gave more positive responses than respondents who came from schools with 800 or more.
Third, ANOVA results for the effect of the school size was significant \( F (2, 48)=3.09; p <.05 \) and influenced the way principals responded to the survey item, “The principal should develop disciplinary measures”. Principals from schools with a student population of 200 to 600 disagreed more with this statement than respondents from schools with 800 students or more. A summary of means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8. Summary for Differences Due to School Size.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>200-600</th>
<th>600-800</th>
<th>&gt;800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background may influence</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions are helpful</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and discipline</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Analysis of Variance.**

Analysis of variance revealed teaching experience, the number of years the respondents served as principals in the same school, ethnicity and the school size had a significant effect on the way they responded to the variables investigated as dependent variables.
CHAPTER FIVE
Qualitative Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates. Qualitative research has often been used in an exploratory manner to gain insight into areas where little information has previously been available. Qualitative research is also used as a tool for adding depth and detail to previously completed quantitative data analysis. While statistical results may suggest general patterns found across a given sample, extending the meaning of those patterns through qualitative methods may provide additional information. Used in this manner qualitative analysis gives richer meaning to those areas (Patton, 1990).

One purpose for using qualitative research is to show what the respondents might have meant when they responded to a survey in a particular manner. In addition, this data extension may serve to suggest how the research fits together as a whole. Patton (1990) emphasized this point when he said that "Qualitative data can put flesh on the bones of survey results." (p.281) While the role of qualitative research as an exploratory tool is generally well understood, the confirmatory role of qualitative data analysis is not.

In this study, I designed the qualitative component to answer more questions providing "additional meaning" to the quantitative data. The how aspect of the role principals play in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates was not addressed through the quantitative survey instrument.

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Based on this limitation, the qualitative data were gathered in an attempt to learn more about the role principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates play in regard to suspensions. In addition, an attempt was made to discover strategies that principals in these schools use which make their approach different from principals in other urban schools as described in the literature.

Yin (1993) differentiates between the "sampling" logic of survey research and "replication" logic of case studies. He suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on the theoretical proposition being studied than on the number of methods of selecting the sample. Specifically he says the case study does not represent a "sample". The investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to emulate frequencies. He recommends including multiple case studies or replications as a means of increasing internal validity.

In this chapter, I present four case studies of principals and assistant principals. I selected the principals and assistant principals from four predominantly African-American urban middle schools. The principals and assistant principals represented four geographical urban areas in Louisiana. I calculated the overall suspension rate for each school by averaging the number of suspensions for three years: 1992-1993, 1993-1994, and 1994-1995. I rank ordered schools starting at the top with schools with low suspension rates. The first quartile consisted of 13 schools while the fourth quartile consisted of 14 schools. From the first quartile, I selected four principals in schools with the lowest percentage of suspensions as the
sample for the cases studies. In addition, the principals and assistant principals were chosen to represent typical urban middle schools in regard to size and location.

All the school visits were originally scheduled for the morning hours; however, some changes had to be made, so some interviews took place in the afternoon. Observations involved spending some time with either the principal or the assistant principal at lunch time or at the end of the day. Observations were recorded as informal, running commentaries on the school and classroom activities including suspension incidents. The observations were intended as a means of setting the stage for principal interview responses (Patton, 1990).

The interviews were semi-structured with the original design of the interview guide being based on Patton's (1990) open-ended question technique. The interview questions were divided into four sections. The first section consisted of five general questions which were designed to provide personal background information. The second section had eight items that were designed to elicit information on the strategies principals used to address discipline challenges. The third section consisted of nine items that were designed to provide information on how principals perceived suspension and suspension policy. The last section consisted of seven items which focused on how principals used suspensions in their schools. During the interviews, additional questions were asked when responses were unclear or amplification was desirable. All interviews were tape recorded with the principal's permission and were conducted either in the principal's office or in the faculty lounge (See Appendix B).
I spent an equivalent of 11 school days in the four schools observing and interviewing principals and assistant principals. Time spent with each individual principal or the assistant principal ranged from 40 minutes to almost three hours. Individual interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes to one hour 20 minutes depending upon restraints imposed at the school level and the individual principal detail level. Although I had initially planned to make observation at each site for three days, I ended up spending four days at each site. All the principals responded by providing lengthy elaboration to their answers when probes were used. The names of the schools and principals are fictitious. The personal and organizational characteristics of the four principals and the assistant principals are summarized in Table 5.1.

Hatarini Middle School

The School Setting.

The school was situated at the central area of the northern side of Flora, only two or three miles from the downtown section of the city. The school was large with about 800 students. At first, I thought it was a high school. After I spoke to the principal during my second interview, I learned my initial perception was not far from the truth. The school was founded in 1950 as Hatarini High School and was designated as an African American High School. In 1960, a new high school was constructed at Capito Avenue and was called Hatarini High School. An overflow of students necessitated the move. As a result, Hatarini at Wakulima Street became
Hatarini Middle School. Before that time, there were only two middle schools in the school district that were African-American: Cheusi Lab and Shule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>School Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Middle 780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>50's</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Ph. D</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Middle 790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Teacher &amp; Coach</td>
<td>Middle 790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>50's</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Middle 690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motto</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Inside</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Middle 680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>Middle 680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britt</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Central Office</td>
<td>Junior High School 1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbie</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Master's + 30 hours</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Middle 1007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school was located in a big compound with three large playgrounds. The outside walls were originally light yellow, but the color had faded with time, an indication that the walls needed to be repainted. The grounds were freshly mowed, but the chain link fence surrounding the school playground was broken down in some sections. From the outside, broken windows could be seen. Generally, the school was not an inviting place to enter.
Since Mrs. Jane Muthoni's appointment as the principal, the inside of the main building had been given a thorough facelift. The inside of the building looked considerably better than the outside, and according to one of the secretaries "the condition of the school had improved in the last few years." The hallways and classrooms were large and had been recently painted. Almost every classroom was decorated. Attractive pictures and students' work were hanging along the walls in many classrooms. A large section of the main hallway was designed for display of the trophies and awards the school had won over the years in academic and athletic activities. There were also many posters with the school's motto near the main office. One such poster read "You can be whatever you want to be because this school believes in you." During my second visit a new poster which read, "We cannot spell success without you," had been placed in the hallway. In each classroom, the lower windows had been painted "to keep the heat out." Each classroom had one small window air conditioning unit. There were five rules neatly written in every classroom I visited. These rules were:

1. Respect yourself and you will respect others
2. Respect school property
3. Always have a pass before leaving the classroom
4. We solve problems through dialogue not fights
5. Do not run in the hallways

The office area, consisting of the main office, the principal and assistant principal's office, was spacious, recently painted, clean, and neat. Mrs. Jane
Muthoni’s office had a pleasant look, with yellow walls, attractive wallpaper borders, and lace curtain in the windows. The assistant principal’s office was small and lacked the cleanliness and neatness of the principal’s office.

Despite its rough and unfriendly exterior, the main building was in fairly good condition. The classrooms and hallways were clean and recently painted. The cafeteria, the auditorium, and playground did not show any signs of wear and tear.

Mrs. Jane Muthoni: Principal, Hatarini Middle School

Mrs. Muthoni was an African-American female, in her late 40s, married, and had four grown children. She was high school English teacher for more than 18 years before becoming a principal at Hatarini Middle School. The school was the second largest middle school in the district. Jane had two assistant principals, one for discipline and the other for instruction. When another graduate student and I first visited the school, Mrs. Muthoni was waiting for us and received us warmly. During our second visit we found her busy observing teachers in classrooms so we had to wait for her to finish.

The Community

Hatarini Middle School was located in the central part of the northern side of Flora City. It was situated on Wakulima Street, about quarter of a mile from Kenyatta Boulevard which is a major thoroughfare in the city. It also served to separate the center city from its industries and chemical plants. There were very few new buildings in the area surrounding the school. Many of the school buildings were old, neglected, run down and in need of serious repair.
The school was located in a poor urban area that had a reputation as the "leading high crime area" in Flora City and was inhabited by African-Americans. According to the principal, the demography of the school had not changed over the years because north Flora City was originally designed for African-Americans. The school appeared to be out of proportion with the surrounding buildings in terms of its large size. It appeared as if it was located in the wrong place. Hatarini Middle School served students from four different parts of Flora City.

The Student Population

The 790 students in Hatarini Middle School were from the most depressed part of one of the most disadvantaged school districts in the state. The student body was approximately 98% African-American and 2% white. More than 90% of the students qualified for federal lunch programs, an indication of the socioeconomic level of the community. Students who attended Hatarini Middle school were bussed from four main areas, including the urban district, Shapo, Boper and Sabatia. According to the overall suspension rates for three years: 1992-1993, 1993-1994, and 1994-1995, Hatarini middle school had an average 14% of all students suspended.

The Faculty

Hatarini Middle School was the second largest middle school in the school district. The faculty consisted of 30 African-Americans and 15 whites. There were 45 classroom teachers, several auxiliary teachers and a number of teachers aides. Mrs. Muthoni knew her teachers well because some of them had been in the school
for over ten years, and she seemed to have formed good relationships with them.

During the interview, she commented:

I am a good listener and support my teachers 100%, for without them I cannot run this school. By listening to teachers and acting upon their requests as quickly as I can, I tell them that they are responsible and should solve minor discipline problems instead of bringing them to my office. If a problem comes to me it means the teachers and the assistant principal have tried all other interventions and failed and the only solution is for us to make an administrative decision. Teachers' cooperation is critical in maintaining discipline.

During my initial observation the teachers seemed uneasy and apprehensive. They were friendly but seemed suspicious about my presence. They seemed unsure about their classroom control skills and may have thought I was there to evaluate them. At times, it seemed as if they simply did not want me in their classrooms. However, they seemed to relax during the second day of my observation. Mrs. Muthoni introduced me to almost every faculty member, the cafeteria workers, and many of the students. She told each person a little about my study and told the students that their school was lucky to be selected for the study.

The Principal's Perception of Discipline

Concerning the students in the school and their general behavior, Jane commented, "The students here are good considering their home background. Like other inner-city schools, we have problems to solve here and there, but we really love these kids and that is why we want to make a difference in their lives." During the observation her assessment was substantiated. The students were dressed in "baggy" cloths and several students were pushing and pulling each other as they walked in the
hallways. When teachers spoke to them individually or in small groups in the classrooms, in the cafeteria, and in the hallways, they were well behaved. However, during recess or before and after school, the students appeared rowdy. They did not seem to know how to control their emotions. They were laughing and speaking loudly as they walked along the hallways. Often, Mrs. Muthoni and her assistant principals were called upon to sort out some minor scuffle or disagreement between students. In between classes, both Jane and the assistant principals had to stand at different positions in the hallway where the students could see them, which seemed to reduce the students' conflicts.

All the students in the school had recess at the same time, a situation which became chaotic on the playground. Unfortunately, there were only a few teachers that were on duty during recess. It is most probable that the situation would have been under control had the principal asked more teachers to be on duty at that time.

When I asked Mrs. Muthoni to describe herself as an administrator she said:

I'm a good listener. Not only am I a good listener, but I try to solve the problems they bring to me. I try to understand and address the students' concerns as much as I can.... In order to be successful in working with the students, you must understand the cause of their problems. You have to know when to be forceful, when to lay low, etc. My main objective is to reach the student. You have to have the child in mind in whatever you do.

Principal's Perception of Suspensions

Mrs. Muthoni voiced few complaints about the central office personnel or superintendent in regard to the suspension policy, saying:

The district suspension policy is a good guideline. However, it assumes that all students are the same. It is therefore a rigid document that should be
followed with care. I like the suspension policy for it gives order and structure. As an administrator it provides consistency. In addition to the district policy we have a housekeeping policy. There are many areas within the district policy where there is no clear direction regarding the steps that should be taken on certain offenses or where there lacks flexibility. Besides, we know the students and their unique problems better.

Principal's Administration of Discipline

Mrs. Jane Muthoni came from a family of teachers and was, therefore, determined to follow the family tradition. She had a great love for students from her early years. After teaching English in high school for about 18 years, she was encouraged to apply for the position of principal by her supervisor. She said "he saw leadership qualities in me." She was appointed an assistant principal, a position she held for three years before becoming a principal.

Mrs. Muthoni was both a principal and a parent. Her warm, caring and calm but determined personality reflected her as a firm but fair administrator. She was very sensitive to students' problems, and she really believed that the school should do all it could to meet the students' needs in this disadvantaged community. Jane was easily upset by the troubling situations regarding the students' home life. She sadly related many of the problems students encounter at home which included violence and drugs. Many of the students lacked role models they could emulate.

Jane was determined to improve the students' academic standards at Hatarini Middle School. She was very involved with families, and frequently visited parents at home. She said:

The greatest challenge I face in this school is lack of parental involvement in school activities. Discipline is a joint responsibility. Unfortunately, many
parents leave all the responsibility to the school. Discipline problems can be minimized if parents can be more involved.... The problems we encounter in school are reflections of what is happening in the larger society. If students are exposed to violence and crimes at home, what will prevent them from behaving in the same way at school?

**Principal's Administration of Suspensions**

Jane professed that she was strict but fair. Her principle was to try all alternatives before suspending a student. She regarded students' needs as a top priority and would do everything to help a student, even when her actions sometimes went against district policy. She said, "I violate district policy all the time. When it comes to children's welfare, I am ready to face the consequences if I have to." Jane believed in following the rules, but in certain cases, the rules were less important than what she believed was right for her students. Regarding suspension Jane said:

Suspending a student is the last thing I enjoy doing. Many of the students in this school regard school as a refuge from the troubled streets. Sending them to the streets again would be a great mistake. There are some situations when I have no choice but to suspend a student. For instance, if a student brings a firearm or coming with drugs to school, he or she will be suspended in accordance with the district policy. This is because the lives of other students will be endangered.... The magnitude of the offense committed determines whether in-school or out of school suspension will be administered. If a student commits a minor offense other alternatives can be applied which may include counseling, in-school suspension and group mediation.

During my observations, Jane made every effort to understand the students' problems, but was also firm in her manner with students. Two sixth graders, who were involved in a fight during lunch recess, were sent to the office by the assistant principal. The district policy stated that fighting was supposed to result in suspension, but Jane, after consulting the assistant principal, felt that this altercation
was really a judgment call. The incident was not "a real fight but more like pushing."
The duty teacher insisted that the student should be suspended, but Jane was
reluctant to follow the stated policy. Because the two students had previously been
suspended, they were facing a 10-day suspension if she followed the district policy.
After the students were issued an alternate punishment, Mrs. Muthoni confided,
"These two students have problems. Ochieng was released from the hospital last
week. Jerome's parents divorced last month." Mrs. Muthoni then called the teacher
and explained why the two students needed to be given another chance.

A second incident took place when a seventh grader was caught showing a
metal rod that could be used as a weapon to two of his classmates. Again, district
policy stated that anyone caught with any weapon should be suspended. Mrs.
Muthoni followed through and called the mother to carefully explain the situation to
her, and reassured the student's mother that the student really was "a good boy."

Summary of Principal's Activities

Jane showed a caring attitude and an understanding of the students and the
community in which she worked by the way she dealt with discipline in general and
suspensions in particular. She was aware that students' behavior was greatly
influenced by the community from which they came. This understanding was
strengthened by her long experience as a teacher.

Mrs. Muthoni thought that the suspension policy was necessary to provide
structure and direction in the school but at the same time found it to be rigid. For
Mrs. Muthoni, suspension was the last thing she enjoyed doing. She was strict and
fair and prompt to take any necessary action to ensure students were learning without any disruptions.

Mrs. Muthoni had certain expectations about the students in the school. They were expected to behave, to treat teachers with respect, and to complete their assignments on time. Mrs. Muthoni reviewed the student handbook before the school started each week, making revisions where she felt they were necessary. Included in this handbook was a section for students to sign and return, which stated they had "read and understood" the material. Mrs. Muthoni regarded parental involvement in school activities to be a key ingredient to minimizing suspension and other discipline challenges in a school. She lamented the lack of parental involvement at Hatarini Middle School and was doing everything possible to reach the community. Mrs. Muthoni's data are analyzed according to Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence in Figure 5.1, Figure 5.2. and Table 5.2.

George Zambo: Assistant Principal at Hatarini Middle School

Mr. George Zambo was an African-American, in his late 50's, married, and had three grown children. He was the assistant principal at Hatarini Middle School in charge of student discipline. Mr. Zambo was a minister with a doctoral degree in theology. Interviewing Mr. Zambo was very revealing because he looked at suspension and lack of discipline in school from a religious perspective. He grew up in Flora City. He completed his masters degree at Southern University. He earned his doctoral degree in Pittsburgh. George taught in a number of high schools before
Figure 5.1. Domain Analysis for Jane.
Figure 5.2. Taxonomic Analysis for Jane.
he joined Hatarini Middle School. He personally knew the students, their parents
and many community members. Mr. Zambo perceived this as a positive thing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Contrast</th>
<th>Impact on Students and Teachers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jane’s Major Administrative Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Warm, friendly and approachable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Relationship</td>
<td>Considers their needs as paramount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>Supports teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Community Relationship</td>
<td>Involves parents as much as she can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility in the School</td>
<td>Is reasonably visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Style</td>
<td>Strict but fair, democratic type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Reluctant to suspend</td>
</tr>
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</table>

He told me, "I like doing things in the old fashioned way". George's main concern in
the school was to:

make a difference in the lives of these students. We face a formidable task
here because teachers cannot address peer pressure, drugs, domestic and
socioeconomic problems. Parents of many of the students we have show
little concern for their children. For them, school is a dumping ground where
they get rid of their children so that they can continue with their day-to-day
activities undisturbed. It is sad that there is little parent involvement in
school activities in this school for I believe discipline problems can be
minimized if parents are involved in school activities.

George asked the students many questions during my visit. At times he
appeared to be joking and teasing them in a good-natured way. Other times, he was
seriously trying to get some information that would help him solve a problem with
other students. "Who started the fight? Who hit first? John did you see it or were you told about it?", he asked one male student. "Do you know why Dawn is acting the way she does this week?" he asked another.

A student called John was sent in the office for not having completed his homework. George talked to the student, called his mother on the telephone, and searched for reasons behind the problem. The student was sent home 40 minutes early, with instructions to the mother to "Let John complete his assignment." Mr. Zambo was not harsh with the student; he knew from other students and teachers that John had some problems at home.

One student came to Mr. Zambo's office "to check out" the formal procedure for withdrawing from school. He was withdrawing because he did not like school. Mr. Zambo summoned the guidance counselor, and together they tried to convince the student to stay in school so that he would not regret it later. The student was very polite but firm in his position. George probed Kenyatta further and discovered he actually liked school but was being influenced by a few of his peers who had dropped out of school. They called Kenyatta's mother and were able to convince Kenyatta to stay in school.

Mr. Zambo spent a great deal of time interacting with students both formally and informally. According to his formal role as an assistant principal, George worked diligently to investigate problems and potential problems with students, and tried to help the students. Informally, he spent part of his time in the halls,
interacting with students and teachers. During lunch, he walked on the school grounds, joking and laughing with the students.

Assistant Principal's Perception of Discipline

Mr. George Zambo had a very friendly, gregarious and outgoing personality. His age made him like a grandfather to many of the students in the school. When Mrs. Muthoni directed me to Mr. Zambo's office, I found many students waiting on a bench outside his office. I heard the secretary scrutinizing them one by one in an attempt to prioritize those students who could see Mr. Zambo at that particular time.

"What do you want to see Mr. Zambo for Mary?, the secretary asked one student. The student explained that she had been called names by another student. The probing continued. Some students were told to schedule another time to see Mr. Zambo, while others were told to wait depending on the nature and magnitude of their problems. When Mr. Zambo came to his office, he first talked to the students that had pressing needs. I observed and listened to what they were saying with interest. Kamau, one of the students, explained that the teacher said he had hit another student, but he had not. Mr. Zambo probed the matter and told the student to go and bring the other student in the office. Kamau came back with Gitau and after a long discussion with the two boys, he dismissed them and asked them to report to his office the following day.

George believed the students were good and the discipline problems they had at school were a reflection of what was happening in the community. He explained that students did not go to school in a vacuum. They brought with them ideas,
concepts and behaviors from their homes. "Students fight because they do not know a better way to resolve their conflicts if all they have been exposed to was fighting," said Mr. Zambo. He continued to explain that the students lacked "social grace" because of the kind of background from which they came. Many come from single parent families and lack good role models to emulate. Others come from parents who are drug addicts. George added:

We are dealing with a culture within a culture and subculture. We are dealing with substandard students. We have to rally for the final effort to challenge the isolation created to put into extinction the black male.... The generation with which we are dealing requires love, patience, compassion and meaning. We are dealing with crack babies.

During the observation I noted that many of the teachers were standing outside their classroom doors to ensure a smooth transition during class changes. The students made loud noises and commotion as they quickly transferred from one class to the other. The transferring between classes took about five minutes. As the students passed through the hallways, there was pushing and pulling of individual students but nothing out of the ordinary. A lady, whom I later learned was one of the teacher aides, was asking students "Where are you going, baby? You need to be in a classroom somewhere. Hurry up before you are locked out". I learned students were supposed to be in the class on time, and if they did not report on time they had to face the consequences. Another student was asked, "Where is your pass? Here it is ma'am," he answered. No student could be out of class, be allowed to make a telephone call, or go out of the classroom, without a pass. Visitors also had to wear
passes before walking in the school compound. I learned that this was done for security reasons.

**Assistant Principal's Perception of Suspensions**

Like Jane, George believed in trying alternative ways of dealing with disciplinary challenges to suspension. He strongly believed that no student should be suspended from school unless the offense committed was a threat to other students. For instance, students who brought guns, knives or drugs to school had to be suspended. Those students who showed willful disobedience, those who were disrespectful toward teachers, and those who were involved in fighting had first to be counseled and given every opportunity to reform, before they were suspended. He explained that the school had started an advisor-advisee program where each teacher had been assigned to a group of 10-15 students. The purpose of this program was to give teachers an opportunity to work with individual students and help them solve potential problems before they actually happened. Other intervention programs included in-school suspensions, disciplinary clinic in the school and a juvenile alternative program. George pointed out that suspending a student means sending the student to the street where it is more insecure.

George complained about the outlined district suspension policy. He said it is inadequate and full of bureaucratic vagueness in many areas. For instance, students who engage in a fight were supposed to be suspended. The policy had not stipulated the kind of fight and for which age group. He felt that the criteria of the offense to warrant suspension needed to be clearly defined. For instance, the magnitude of the
offense, the nature of the incident and the nature of disrespect should be clearly specified. He said their central office has failed to connect or establish a link between the school and the community. According to George, "the central office was unaware of what was actually happening in schools. The policy was being passed from top to bottom without consultation with those who were to implement it."

George saw double standards in the manner in which the policy exempted special education students from being given the same penalty like the other children for the same offense.

Assistant Principal’s Administration of Discipline

George believed he had a God given mission to fulfill at Hatarini. He perceived students’ disciplinary challenges as a “cry” for help. For George punishing the students was a short-lived answer. The student need love, understanding and acceptance. According to George the “students need to be redeemed from the chaos the society has inflicted upon them.” George told me that he rarely punished students. He believed in counseling and guidance. He said that many students act out because they want acceptance which they do not get at home.

Assistant Principal's Administration of Suspensions

George stressed that students were the product of the community of which they were a part. He believed unless the whole nation was willing to "go back to church and once again teach family values, the current problems will continue. The nation should not complain since it is reaping the bitter fruits it planted."

Mr. George Zambo believed that discipline problems in schools could be solved if there were less politics in the system. He suggested that instead of people
in the central office passing orders, "the entire community should sit down and find out how the judicial system, religious system, home and school could be more involved."

When I inquired about the disciplinary challenges encountered in the school, George explained that gang-related fights, throwing objects, profanity and drug-related cases were common. During my observation, I noted that many students interacted with George easily. When they were sent to the office, they listened to what he said. George dealt with each problem patiently, explaining to the students where they made their mistakes, while encouraging them to improve. He assigned various kinds of punishment, from attending discipline clinics to writing letters of apology to the offended victims.

Mr. Zambo was interested in the students at Hatarini Middle School and tried to help them work through their problems. He told me that he knew every student in the school by name. He proudly pointed out one student and said, "You see that boy. He is a reformed drug addict. A year ago he had fallen into very bad company, and now he is high school material." The student was an office worker and spent about 15 minutes in Mr. Zambo's office discussing gang-related incidents, motor vehicles, and his plans for the future. He was completely relaxed in George's presence, and they seemed to be very close. In the second day of my observation a teacher reported a boy "who was always walking in the hallways" instead of being in the classroom. The boy's name was Mtoro. When the teacher saw Mtoro, she told
him she was going to report him to Mr. Zambo. Mtoro answered back that he did not care. "Yes, you care" said the teacher and an exchange of words followed. The boy was then sent to Mr. Zambo's office who had a long discussion with the boy. He telephoned Mtoro's mother and informed her that Mtoro was to be suspended for two days for being rude to a teacher.

**Summary of Assistant Principal’s Activities**

George did not think suspension of students was the answer to the problems that schools faced. To him, the answer lay in amending decaying family values and family structure. He was skeptical in regard to the district suspension policy which he characterized as being rigid and lacking flexibility in dealing with individual students.

George pointed out that discipline challenges could only be solved if the central office, the school, and civic and religious leaders could come together. In addition, he pointed out that if the financial resources required were available, alternative programs to suspension such as counseling or behavior clinics could be started. Services offered by such programs could be beneficial to students.

Similarities and differences between Jane and George are presented in Table 5.3.

**Lafaye Middle School**

The school is located along highway 50 and is less than a quarter of a mile from Interstate 13. Highway 50 divided Lafaye Middle School from Lafaye Southwestern University. A very clearly written sign that read "Lafaye Middle
School, the cleanest school in the city" pointed to the school. When I first saw the school. I thought it was a high school because of its size and the space it occupied. There were four main entrances to the school with big and well built doors. The two story building was clean and the walls were decorated with displays of students' work and messages about student pride, such as "Success is our goal." Many trophies and awards from different national contests were displayed on the wall.

Although the school was built in 1926, it was still in good physical condition. The school was built as a high school for white students only, but was later made a middle school. It was the first accredited high school in Lafaye. The school had

<table>
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<th>Table 5.3. Summary of Similarities and Differences Between Jane and George</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Muthoni</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows care and concern for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is reluctant to suspend students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceives disciplinary challenges from humanistic point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in parental involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puts student’s need as a top priority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modifies district suspension policies as the situation demands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Believes in supporting teachers</td>
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three principals since it was started. The first principal was there for 30 years and
the second for 28. Brown Shujaa had been in the school for 11 years. The grounds
were neatly mowed, and the campus was clean. The main building contained
classrooms situated around the perimeter of a double hallway, with the office
complex, cafeteria, library, the band room, the gymnasium and the auditorium
located between the two halls.

Brown Shujaa, the Principal of Lafaye Middle School

Brown, the principal of Lafaye Middle School was a man in his middle
forties. He had a masters degree in education administration and had 30 plus credit
hours above masters. Brown came from a family of educators. His father, mother,
uncles, aunts and cousins were all teachers. Brown was married and had grown
children.

The Community

Lafaye is a large, urban community of about two hundred thousand.
Transportation to Lafaye was easy. Interstate 13 passed very close and highway 50
divided the city into two nearly equal parts. Many of the residents of Lafaye worked
in chemical plants and industries in the city. The unemployment level was high,
compared to other cities of its size. Fifty percent of the student population at Lafaye
Middle School came from single family homes.

The Students

Lafaye Middle School was the largest middle school in the parish. The
school had an enrollment of about 780 students of whom 60% were African
American, 31% whites and 1% others. Seventy-five percent of the students were from nearby neighborhoods and 25% were bused from another part of the district. From what I was told by one of the teachers, "most of the students in the school come from low socioeconomic backgrounds." This was confirmed by the data from school composite records which showed that 75% of the students at Lafaye received free lunch.

Lafaye Middle School serves an area that is very diverse demographically ranging from upper middle class communities to poverty level communities. Typically, high pregnancy, homicide, robbery, drug problems and all other problems that are found in urban areas were common in Lafaye. Students whose parents were educated at Lafaye were certified babysitters who voluntarily offered their services to babies of students who became pregnant while in school. Besides being taught the normal academic subjects, some of the students were taught medical technology, dietary and other life skills.

According to the records obtained from the central office, the overall suspension rates from three years: 1992-1993, 1993-1994, and 1994-1995, Lafaye Middle school had an average of 13% of all the students in the school suspended. However, Lafaye was a School in transition and the rate of suspension rates was decreasing from year to year.

The students were well behaved in classrooms, the library, the cafeteria and the auditorium. However, during recess, while they were waiting for the bus, and when leaving the school, they were very rowdy. During the observation, I noted
that the students feared the principal very much. For instance, three students were running in the hallway and when they came to a corner and saw the principal they almost froze. I heard one student say to the other "I would hate to be called to the principal's office. I do not mess up with him. He can wedge you." I later learned "to wedge" means to hold someone tightly by the back of the pant.

Lafaye Middle School was in a large school district, and "getting things to run smoothly" was not easy. It required proper coordination and delegation of duties so that each person would know what was expected. Mr. Shujaa pointed out that when he was transferred to Lafaye there were communication breakdowns, and as he put it, "The right hand did not know what the left hand was doing."

Deviation from the school schedule was common. Either individual students were seen out of class, or entire classrooms were with the teacher, but away from the classroom. In one incident, an entire class of students was found on the benches outside the cafeteria. Brown blew a whistle, which he always carried around his neck, to attract the students' attention and asked, "Why are you sitting here instead of being in the classroom?" A student responded, "Our teacher is in conference in the cafeteria." Mr. Shujaa did not pursue the matter further, but related to me that he was aware there was a problem with the lunch schedule. Because they were forced to feed many students in a short amount of time, the next class period was often interrupted. I observed that students had to have a pass before they could walk to the office or hallway when classes were in process. Students also had to have a
pass to be allowed to use the telephone in the main office. I also noted that all the
visitors had to have a pass before they were allowed to go around the school.

Some students were in the hallway during class time. Either they had "to go
to the office" or "were looking" for someone. Those students who went to the office
were given inconsistent responses by the secretary. Some students were allowed to
make their case and use the telephone, while others were sent away.

Often class periods were interrupted by intercom announcements. Official
"morning and afternoon " announcements were made by a member of the student
council, and Linda, the secretary, and the attendance office personnel routinely used
the intercom to summon individual students to the office. During the last period
before lunch break, the intercom was used six times. Mr. Shujaa had a tentative
routine for the day because:

It is difficult at this time in the semester to establish a proper routine. There
are just too many things going on. When I am out of the office, there is
usually someone or something waiting for me when I return. Parents,
teachers, students and workers need to see me immediately, and I have to
stop what I am doing... The paperwork has to wait. When I started, I
thought I would be able to do paperwork in the morning, and attend to other
things in the afternoon. That did not work very well and I turned it around
and did paperwork in the afternoon. That did not work very well either, for
I kept messing it up all day. Planning the day's work is very difficult.

For instance, Brown planned three classroom observations for the first part of the
school day. Instead, the following field notes show the actual schedule of the events
that occurred.

8:00 Met with the assistant principal to discuss a case of two students who had
been involved in a fight the previous day.
8:15 Found substitutes for two teachers who had called and said they were sick that morning.

8:30 Talked with two female teachers who had a misunderstanding.

8:45 Talked to an angry parent who arrived unannounced to discuss a problem with a teacher.

9:00 Read mail for the day and made two phone calls.

9:15 Dealt with three students who had been skipping classes.

9:30 Talked with special education supervisor who had arrived unannounced.

10:00 Attended a meeting with the discipline building committee.

11:00 Went to the cafeteria with the assistant principal to assist teacher on duty in supervising students.

12:30 Made a few telephone calls.

12:45 Started doing paperwork.

1:30 Met with special education teachers and the school district's supervisor.

That schedule of events, totally different from the one Brown had planned, is a typical indication of his work day at Lafayette Middle School. Brown was doing his best to be in control of this crisis management situation and was positive that things had improved over the last four years.

**The Teachers**

There were 45 teachers and 25 ancillary staff at Lafayette Middle School. One third of the teachers in the school were African-American and the remaining teachers were whites, in comparison to 1991 when there were only two African-American
teachers. There were six white women teachers and two African-American women. The remaining 37 teachers were males which is a high percentage when compared to that of females. The teachers seemed to be very close. The faculty members were friendly and congenial. They were curious about my visit, and when they found out why I was there they were quick to defend their school. "This is a wonderful school. Although we have a few problems, they are the kind of problems common in urban schools," one of the teachers told me.

Mr. Brown Shujaa did not have much to say against the central office, but he pointed out that many politics were involved. He said he could get whatever he wanted because he knew the system. Brown pointed out that lack of adequate financial resources was a great drawback to maintaining effective discipline because:

In order for us to have alternative strategies for dealing with behavior challenges, more personnel would be required to run behavior clinics and to counsel students. We only have one counselor for the entire school. As the situation is currently, we cannot do as much as we would like due to lack of manpower [sic]

I did not see much interaction between the principal and the faculty members during my observation. I only saw two teachers who went to Brown's office briefly. The conversation between the two teachers and the principal was cordial.

Background Information

Mr. Shujaa was promoted to principal four years earlier. Prior to his appointment, he had taught for eight years in the gifted program. Brown said:

I never served as an assistant principal. I was aggressive with the central office and somehow they decided to silence me by giving me a principalship. I was brought here against my will. This particular school had a lot of
problems before I came. Now we have turned it around and we will continue. One of the secrets to our school was getting committed teachers from the central office. When I agreed to come to Lafaye Middle School I gave the office a condition—I asked them to promise to give me good teachers. I like taking risks in life and that was one of them. As things have turned out, everything has worked well.

Brown had a vision of making Lafaye Middle School the best in the state. He presented himself as a calm but determined administrator. No one could mistake Mr. Brown Shujaa for a classroom teacher. His way of talking and acting portrayed that he really was in charge of the school. He believed that every student had a right to an education. Mr. Shujaa described himself as a participatory leader:

I like to surround myself with well-educated people and allow them to do their job. I ask what advice they can give. I hold the philosophy that I should have as much input from experts and my teachers as I possibly can and then make my own decision based on a democratic sort of leadership.

During my observation I noted the authority flowed from top to bottom. From my observation, I found there was a contrast between how Brown described himself as a leader and how he acted. Teachers were given directives, and they did what was required. It seemed to me as if there was a gap between the office and the teachers. I did not see much interaction between Mr. Shujaa and the teachers.

During recess, I talked to one of the teachers and asked him about the school. He commented that "Brown is a real tough administrator. He has changed this school from nothing into something and that is the reason we respect him." Brown believed in having a strong student government. Concerning this he said:

When students are involved in the decision making process regarding school activities, through their government, they gain ownership and become committed to the activities, rules or ideas. Instead of resenting these
activities, rules or ideas as being imposed by the administration, they respect and obey them simply because they have been involved.

**Principal’s Perception of Discipline**

Lafaye Middle School had a school wide discipline program. This program had been formulated by the discipline committee consisting of teachers, students, parents and other members of the community. The program consisted of rules and regulations under the umbrella of the parish policy. In order for students to understand the rules and the legal implications of their actions, behavior clinics and peer mediation discussions were held. This was done in order to minimize disruption and to provide quality education to the students.

Concerning discipline challenges, Brown narrated that when he was involuntarily transferred to Lafaye Middle school, the school was in chaos. There were a number of incidents where students had been caught with guns and drugs within the school building. He proudly said "none of those things has ever happened since I took over." He explained that he and the teachers worked with the students to make Lafaye a better school. He pointed to a picture on the wall of a student and commented "Susan was the student of the year in the state." There were many academic awards as well, such as football and basketball trophies hanging on the wall of his office. Brown believed that it was the duty of the school to change the "idea of the student from not wanting to be here to wanting to be here."

To address discipline challenges in the school, Mr. Shujaa gave students an opportunity to set rules, guidelines, and standards in accordance with the district
guidelines. He commented, "students are more committed to the rules they made. Moreover, they no longer view the rules as imposed upon them from the top and therefore have respect for rules and guidelines they have formulated."

Mr. Shujaa believed many students portrayed disruptive behavior because they lacked self-esteem. The school had an open door policy for all students to develop self-esteem. Because many of the students came from homes where they were not given clear direction, Brown believed it was the school's duty to tell them what to do and what not to do. He said, the school "tries to give what the society demands of them (students) and approach them at their level." There had to be consistency in the manner, rules and regulations to be enforced.

Many of the students in the school were constantly exposed to drugs in the community and the greatest concern Brown had was:

To teach them what is expected at school---change their mentality. This is the way we live in the street and this is the way we are expected to live in school. We expect a response at school. We expect the school to teach the students how to behave and which habits that are unacceptable. We expect the students to change the community. Often you find students from poor areas are the ones that cause problems.... If the parents do not own anything, then they do not teach their children ownership. As a result, when these students come to school, we have to teach them that this school is their school and, therefore, they should respect it.

**Principal's Perception of Suspensions**

Mr. Shujaa pointed out that suspension had its place especially if students' behavior interfered with other children's learning. However, suspension was used as the last option. In dealing with most undisciplined students, "we show such a student an alternative way of behaving using techniques like behavior modification and..."
reality therapy." Reality therapy is a counseling technique that helps a client determine if their behavior is an effective way of obtaining their desired goal.

During my observation I saw Sandra, the assistant principal, using reality therapy with students who had been habitually going to class late. The students had been detained during lunch break for a few minutes. The technique involved questioning the students and giving them an opportunity to come up with solutions.

In order to adequately address discipline and minimize suspension, Brown said that parent involvement was a critical ingredient. He added:

If a parent shows ownership for the building and in the success of the school, the student's problems become our problems. As the African proverb says "It takes the whole village to raise a child.” The child becomes our child. This school belongs to the public and what I'm trying to do is not only to involve the parents in school activities but the entire community -- the local businessmen, industries and so on. We have 13 sponsors -- Coca-cola, Acadian Ambulance, local banks, etc.

Mr. Shujaa provided support to his teachers and believed support was a two-way function. He believed that his discipline policy was so strongly supported by his teachers because they knew that the administration stood behind them. Brown said, "Punishment should be viewed as corrective not punitive. I want to stamp out the undesirable behavior, so that teachers will know that we give consistent discipline irrespective of who the offender is." I observed an incident which confirmed Brown's desire.

During recess time, a teacher brought a student to the principal's office. The teacher said that the student had answered him in an inappropriate manner. The
student had a different version to tell. While the student admitted that he had used improper language, he revealed that the teacher had made a bad joke aimed at him. Mr. Shujaa did not want the matter to develop into a confrontation between the student and the teacher, so he capitalized on the student's weakness. He made him realize it was wrong for him to use inappropriate language to a teacher under any circumstances. John admitted he was wrong and was liable for punishment. He apologized to the teacher and was referred to behavior clinic the following day. He was also warned that if such behavior reoccurred, his parents would be called to school for a conference. After the student left, Brown told the teacher he had been wrong to make fun of a student. The teacher apologized, apparently, happy that Mr. Shujaa had not embarrassed him in front of the student.

Principal's Administration of Discipline

Brown believed the district's suspension policy was good because it was a document to which administrators could refer in order to deal with behavior problems. Without it, there would be little consistence which was necessary in installing order and structure in an institution. For instance, he explained that at Lafaye Middle School, students who had been sent to the principal's office three consecutive times were sent to the outreach program for counseling. If the inappropriate behavior continued, the student was sent to the teacher assessment team for more testing. From there, a decision whether to suspend or not suspend the student was made.

However, Brown did not like how the suspension policy dealt with special education students. Special education students could not be suspended or given the
same punitive measures as other students. Brown said he would like to see that part of the policy changed because for the policy to be effective, it must be consistent for everybody.

When Brown was asked which worked better for most students in-school or out-of school suspension, he explained that it depended on the student. However, he added that in-school suspension worked better for most students because it provided them with an opportunity to complete their school work and also made them stay off the streets.

During the interview, Mr. Shujaa pointed out that paperwork involved in suspension hindered implementation of district policy. The principal was supposed to report to teachers within a given time period explaining the steps he had taken. "I do not like the fact I have to report back to teachers. We are also teachers and can make a sound judgement." He also said, "the best way of formulating a suspension policy that can be effective at the school level would be to give each school a mandate to formulate their own suspension policy. Such a policy would have flexibility because the teachers know the students best."

Principal's Administration of Suspensions

Brown pointed out that the number of students suspended varied from semester to semester but averaged 60 students. Students who had committed the same offense three to four times were suspended depending on the nature and the
Data for Mr. Brown Shujaa are analyzed according to Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence as shown in Figures 5.3., Figure 5.4 and Table 5.4.

Figure 5.3. Domain Analysis for Brown.
COMMUNICATION IS A WAY OF

- CONVEYING INFORMATION
- LISTENING
- ENSURING UNDERSTANDING
- CLARIFYING ISSUES
- REMOVING AMBIQUITIES

TEACHERS
STUDENTS
PARENTS

CONSTANTLY WALKING IN HALLS

VISIBILITY IS A WAY OF

- BEING IN CONTROL
- BEING NOTICED CONSTANTLY

ENCOURAGES

FACILITATOR IS A KIND OF

- LISTENS
- INITIATES
- ADVISES

Figure 5.4. Taxonomic Analysis for Brown.
severity of the offense. Fighting, disrespect to teachers and weapons warranted suspension. In-school suspension was administered when the student committed a non-threatening offense. Brown explained that in-school suspensions worked better than out-of school suspensions. He continued to say that suspension in general "can make a student have a negative attitude toward school," As a result:

We try other alternatives to suspension. We give students an opportunity to make a choice. They can have lunch detention, time out, or behavior clinic. In conclusion, we try to reverse things in the old way. We teach students to respect adults, keep right as they walk in the hall and show respect to others.

Table 5.4 Summary of Brown's Dimensions of Contrast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Contrast</th>
<th>Impact on Students and Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brown's Major Administrative Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Strong, warm and aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Relationship</td>
<td>Develops a structured atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>Sets high expectations, directs teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Community Involvement</td>
<td>Involves parents and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Highly visible in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Style</td>
<td>Authoritative, democratic and facilitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Suspends after exhausting other options</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Principal's Activities

Brown gave students opportunities to set school rules, guidance and standards in accordance with the district's guidelines. He believed that it was school's responsibility to teach the students the behaviors that were acceptable at
school. According to Brown, suspension had its place in school especially if student's behavior interfered with other students' learning

Mrs. Sandra Wanja: Assistant Principal of Lafayette Middle School

Mrs. Wanja was a white lady, in her early 50's, married, and had three grown children. She was the first college graduate in her family. She became a teacher because it was "the only profession she knew that was accessible to women during her time." She taught for 26 years before she became an administrator. She had a master's degree and 30 plus hours above master's degree. She pointed out that unlike many assistant principals who were entirely left to handle discipline challenges, she shared administrative work with Brown.

Mrs. Wanja got into administration by applying for a position that was vacant. Her main objective was to transfer to another district, something she could not have done easily as a teacher without losing her contract, but as an administrator she was released without any problem.

Assistant Principal's Perception of Discipline

Sandra believed that as a good administrator, she had to be consistent with the school discipline policy and with students. She explained:

The moment students discover that you are not consistent, they tend to stretch you to your limit, and you will lose control, and the school will be in chaos. Students need to know their limits and the consequences they will face if they go beyond those limits.

Mrs. Wanja described herself as a strict but fair administrator, with some flexibility because "there are times when what students do must be judged according to the
situation." Mrs. Wanja went on to explain that she had been trained in reality therapy and was trying to use the knowledge she had gained in her training to "get the students to take responsibility of their behavior."

Concerning student behavior, Sandra believed many students were disruptive because of peer pressure. They were acting in a certain way so their peers would recognize them. They could also be disruptive at school because of their home environment. Many students also lacked good role models. Regarding students' discipline challenges in school, Sandra commented, "We are doing a good job considering the background from which the students have come." She continued to explain that the goal of the school was to make "these students become taxpayers instead of becoming a liability to the nation."

During my observations an incident took place that confirmed Mrs. Wanja's point. At ten o'clock the principal came into Sandra's office and told her that the police had arrived. Everyone was put on alert. The principal asked Sandra to go with me. When we reached the hallway, we were greeted by two police women. I was introduced to officer Tanya and officer Zako and their dog Zeep. Sandra explained that the police often came to school unannounced to check for drugs.

Mrs. Sandra Wanja led the team to different classes. She knocked on the door and all the students were told to go and make a line on the hallway while officer Tanya ordered Zeep to search students' book bags for drugs. The police dog was instructed in Dutch so that no one else but the trained officer could instruct it. Officer Tanya told Zeep "Zitter" and she sat down and waited for
instructions. Then officer Tanya pointed to a bag and said "Zeopae" and the dog searched. In one classroom, the dog scratched at the teacher's desk for a long time. At that time I was wondering what the dog would do if there were drugs. Officer Tanya explained if the dog found drugs, she would bark several times.

I was told that students at Lafaye Middle school were required to carry their books in transparent bags. During the search for drugs, the assistant principal collected all the students' book bags that were not transparent and took them to the office. The students did not resist, for they were aware it was against the school policy to have non-transparent bags. The team searching for drugs went to five classes, but did not find any drugs.

In every classroom we visited, I was introduced to the teachers who were briefly told what I was doing in their school. As we headed for the office, Mrs. Wanja explained that a year ago the school abolished the use of lockers after it was discovered the locker had become drug hiding areas." The locker areas were to be converted into classrooms. Concerning the challenges she faced as an administrator, Sandra said:

A lot of times we want to tell the students what they ought to do. I must remind myself that I need to come down to their level and work from there. Many times we work on their attitude but not behavior. It is an issue of concern for me now with the increase of black population 60% compared to 40% white.... I am cognizant that there are many factors that affect student behavior. I keep on reminding myself to treat everyone as equally as I can.

Another concern that Sandra had pertains to teachers themselves. She felt discipline was a joint venture. Unfortunately, many of them did not realize they
were equally responsible for completing their part in the new referral form before they brought them to the office. Sandra showed me a certain section that the teachers were supposed to complete, which indicated the intervention that had been used before forwarding the referral forms to her office for action. "Unless the teachers did their part, by dealing with discipline challenges in the classrooms," Mrs. Wanja said, "students may know that the teacher does not have any control. I try to put responsibility back to them. If they bring an incomplete form, I send it back to them."

**Assistant Principal's Perception of Suspensions**

Mrs. Wanja expressed doubt as to whether suspension, behavior modification, or behavior clinic were beneficial to the student unless the student had a very responsible parent. However, she pointed out that suspension gave everyone a rest from the disruptive behavior. One of the dilemmas the school faced was the inadequate human resources to assist students with discipline challenges. For instance, Lafaye Middle School only had one counselor to work with 800 students.

When I asked Sandra how she dealt with the most undisciplined student in the school, she said:

Many times such a student ends up getting suspended. However, the first step should be the referral of the student to the school counselor. Calling and informing the parent about the child's behavior should be the second step. The parent is called to school and informed about the child's condition. If the undesirable behavior persists, the student is referred to lunch detention where the counselor and I talk to a group of students. If that does not help, the student is recommended for an outreach program for a
day or two—which is actually an in-school suspension at a different school. I must say, if the student commits a severe offense, the police arrest such a student.

Mrs. Wanja also believed that parental involvement was the most critical ingredient in dealing with discipline challenges, "When a student sees that the parent cares about what is happening to them, it changes their whole response in school. If you see good students at school, you should know their parents are involved." Lafaye Middle School had a school-wide discipline program which was patterned after the district policy. I requested copies of both district and school discipline policies, and my request was granted. The school-wide discipline policy was more flexible and could meet the students' needs better. However, there were some irregularities in reporting suspensions to the central office.

During my observation, lunch detention had been designed for students with minor offenses like tardiness, running in the halls and disruption in the classroom. There were about 12 students in attendance. At this particular lunch detention, Sandra asked each student to explain why they were late for classes. Using reality therapy techniques, she asked the students questions concerning the consequences of their behavior for themselves and the other students. The students were asked to write letters indicating they would improve their behavior, and then they were dismissed. I thought the session was helpful.

**Assistant Principal's Administration of Discipline**

District suspension policy stipulated the kind of penalty that was to be given for specific offenses. The offenses ranged from fighting, throwing objects,
profanity, disrespect to teachers, drugs, weapons, destroying property to skipping classes. Unlike Brown, Sandra did not like the suspension policy because of a section that required her to call parents and tell them that their son or daughter was to be suspended. This was a great disappointment for both her and the parents. When asked which part of discipline policy she wanted to change or modify, Sandra indicated: "special education. We had one student who was to be expelled, but because he was a special education student, he had to be readmitted. The message we are giving to other students is that you can do whatever you like because you are exceptional."

Sandra pointed out how the district discipline policy affected the number of students suspended in individual schools. Administrators acted like police officers "who arrested people just to fill their quota." In Lafaye Parish there was a center called Holy Rosary where students had to be referred for suspension. There were many students that did not deserve to be at the center but had been sent there simply because the center existed. "In order to make suspension more effective, consistency and firmness were essential," Sandra commented.

Mrs. Wanja believed that suspension would be reduced if parents were required to accompany their children to school after the children had been suspended. Many parents made telephone calls or wrote a letter.

Assistant Principal's Administration of Suspensions

Sandra believed the greatest setback for implementing the suspension policy was the parents' failure to take responsibility for their children. While there were
Table 5.5. Summary of Similarities and Differences Between Brown and Sandra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brown</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believes a structured atmosphere decreases disciplinary challenges.</td>
<td>Believes in establishing routine and structure in order to decrease disciplinary challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students needs are a top priority.</td>
<td>Students needs are a top priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefers to have alternative to suspension but lack of financial resources becomes a hindrance.</td>
<td>Prefers alternative to suspension and administers reality therapy techniques as a way of helping students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes involving parents in school activities is an effective way of reducing students' suspensions.</td>
<td>Believes parents involvement in school activities is an effective way of minimizing disciplinary challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in collaboration with teachers.</td>
<td>Believes disciplinary challenges require a collaborative approach and all should be involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values district suspension policy but dislikes the treatment of special education students in the policy.</td>
<td>Does not like district suspension policy especially the section that deals with special education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is visible in the school</td>
<td>Is visible in the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers his leadership as that of a participator-facilitator type</td>
<td>Considers herself as authoritarian who is strict but fair.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 60 students who were suspended every semester, some parents did not show up at school even once. When I looked at the school log book, Sandra's assertion of the number of students suspended per semester was confirmed. When I asked what criteria determined students' suspensions, I was told:

That is a judgement call! For instance, a small fight might not necessarily lead to suspension. It may require scraping the floor. The severity of the offense is what determines the type of punishment to be given. Also, we usually consider whether the child is truly sorry for what he has done and
whether he/she is a first, occasional or notorious offender or whether the offense committed is a general classroom misbehavior.

Sandra believed that in-school suspensions had an advantage over out-of-school suspensions because the students were not "out in the streets." Before the student was suspended, the administration first had to exhaust all alternatives, which included peer mediation and conflict resolution.

Summary of Assistant Principal's Activities

Sandra was not sure whether suspension helped the individual students who were suspended. She considered parent involvement in school activities to be a critical ingredient to dealing with discipline challenges. She viewed the district's discipline policy to be full of bureaucratic overtones and vague in many areas. Table 5.5 shows similarities and differences between the views of Mr. George Zambo and Mrs. Sandra Wanja.

Molo Middle School

The School Setting

The school was located on Medora Street and was only a few miles from Interstate 10. Molo Middle School was a tan brick one story building, built in the 1920's in a four square mile compound. The main building housed gifted and talented classrooms, special education classrooms, regular education classes, physical education areas, an auditorium, a cafeteria, and choir and band rooms. The exterior doors were brightly painted in school colors which were yellow, green, and blue. The grass was freshly mowed and gave the school a pleasant look. The school was
founded as a high school for whites and was called Marion High School. During that time, the residents of the surrounding area were white. In 1967, it was changed to Lincoln Elementary School. The school was changed to Molo Middle School in 1972. The school was to mainly serve the northern part of the city. Although the aging school showed signs of wear and tear, the grounds were clean and the landscaping was well maintained. Beautifully colored flowers had been planted near the entrance of the school and made visitors feel welcomed.

The office area was strategically located so that visitors to the school could recognize it at once. The office area was large and well organized. In the office, a poster stated, "You can make it---- the sky is your limit." There were many trophies, awards and decorations adorning the office area and the hallway.

The principal's office was large, clean and well maintained. The desk was neat and well organized with pictures of the principal's family prominently displayed. Three guest chairs were placed at the front of the desk, and a light brown couch was on the right side of the office.

Mr. Motto Taratibu: principal, Molo Middle School

Mr. Motto Taratibu, principal of Molo Middle School, was an African-American, in his early 50's, married, and had four grown children. His entire education was in the city of Ziwami. Motto was a veteran educator. He taught for 19 years before he was appointed as an assistant principal, a position he held for five years before becoming a principal at Molo Middle School.
Background Information

Mr. Taratibu described himself as a warm, friendly, firm but fair administrator. He wanted Molo to remain as a top school and was determined to help the students by having good teachers and adequate teaching material in the school. Although I did not observe many classroom activities during my visit, what I did see confirmed his assessment of the teachers at the school. Motto was confident that with such a faculty many of the students could finish high school and eventually be admitted to college.

Motto strongly believed the students were the most important individuals in the school setting. He believed in not embarrassing students in front of their peers. He knew that confrontation often led to explosive situations, and he was reluctant to be involved in those types of situations:

If I speak harshly to a student on a one-to-one basis, he can go out and save face. He can say whatever he wants to his peers without feeling embarrassed. I try to treat my students as adults and teach them to take responsibility for their behavior. I let them organize themselves on how to play basketball after lunch and that is working very well. They have acquired pride that they are in this school and can do things for themselves.

During lunch recess we went with the principal to the auditorium where those students who had finished eating their lunch were playing basketball. I observed the orderliness in which they organized themselves. Each class sat in a specific place in the auditorium. Students played in turns, and there were few discipline problems.
During my observation, I noted Motto and Jack, the assistant principal, wore similar clothing. The two looked like twins. Motto explained to me that they wore particular colors on particular days. Students wore shirts and blouses similar to the clothes worn by Motto and Jack. Mr. Taratibu said:

It is this ritual and tradition that make students in this school different from any other school. Our distinctive characteristics make our students proud of this school. We have the mandate to orchestrate these rituals and traditions by setting examples students can emulate.

Mr. Taratibu had certain expectations for the students at Molo. They were expected to behave, treat teachers with respect, and complete all their assignments on time. Included in the handbook was a section for students to sign and return, which indicated that they had "clearly understood the material." Motto told me that he reviewed the student handbook on Mondays and Fridays each week, making revisions where he felt they were necessary.

Motto also had expectations for teachers. They were expected to teach and treat the students with respect. Motto's task was to create an atmosphere that was conducive to teaching and learning. He believed that in order for this goal to be achieved, participation of teachers, parents, and students in school activities was critical and that they must be involved in varying aspects of school life.

When I asked Mr. Taratibu to describe himself as an administrator he said: I am a good listener. With experience, I have learned to listen to what the students have to say. I do not need to come with a lot of preconceived ideas about issues, students or teachers.... I take pride in having a good staff who would emulate and embrace the same principles and vision that I have for the school. I like a staff that is fair, loving, consistent in what is being done, and commitment and have pride in their profession.
He said one of the challenges he was facing was "finding out how to develop a ‘fence of inspiration’ so the students could climb the academic ladder as high as they can possibly go." He explained that this was a difficult task because people tend to emulate individuals in their community. He commented that many people who lived in Ziwani had not gone to college. The students therefore needed a role model "with positive things that the students could emulate---things to move the students in a positive direction."

**The Faculty**

Besides Motto and Jack the assistant principal, there were 37 teachers at Molo Middle School. Mr. Motto Taratibu and Jack Tayari were very close and had a unified vision for the school. Motto said that the school was "stable" because of its good reputation with the central office. Students' performance was the highest in the school district. The faculty was racially mixed and most of the teachers had been at the school for many years.

The faculty was warm, friendly and polite. The majority of the faculty members that I met were female, although I was told that there were several male teachers working at the school. The majority of the older female teachers were African-American, while the majority of the younger female teachers were white. Concerning teachers, Mr. Taratibu commented:

I am very fortunate to have such a group of very committed teachers--both African-American and whites. We have a unified vision which makes it easier for us to work as a team.
The Community

Molo Middle school was located in the heart of an inner-city neighborhood, about three miles from the central district of a metropolitan area. The school was located in the northern part of the city, close to Interstate 10. The residential area around the school consisted of single family homes. Many of the houses were neglected and needed repair. Both the principal and the assistant principals described the neighborhood as a "high crime area." Most of the residents in this neighborhood were blue collar workers who worked in the oil refineries or chemical plants surrounding the area.

The Students

Molo Middle School was a moderately large school with an enrollment of about 690 students of whom 95% were African-American and 5% were white. Primarily living in three different inner-city neighborhoods, about 85% qualified for the free lunch program placing the school in the lowest socioeconomic quartile.

The students were well behaved in the classrooms and in the hallways. They controlled their voices as they moved in the hallways. The principal and the assistant principal stood at strategic positions during recess to remind the students that they were being monitored. Twice, two students were called to the office for running in the hall. Apart from that, the students seemed to be serious about their academic work. Molo Middle School is a magnet school. According to the record
obtained from the central office, 10% of all the students in the school were suspended in three years; 1992-1993, 1993-1994, and 1994-1995.

Principal's Perception of Discipline

Molo Middle School was a comprehensive school. It educated students with diverse academic abilities ranging from special education to talented and gifted students. Mr. Taratibu said that the school did not have any major discipline problems. However, he admitted that at times two students could be involved in a fight. When I probed him further to explain how he dealt with discipline challenges in the school, Motto stated, "common sense drawn from experience." He pointed out that since there were different kinds of discipline challenges, it was difficult to come up with one clear formula that would deal with all challenges. He concluded by saying that different discipline challenges depended highly on the nature of the offenses committed and the situation under which they were committed. For instance, students who had committed minor cases were recommended for small group counseling or peer mediation.

Mr. Taratibu believed that suspension was helpful sometimes, even though it was not the best way to minimize discipline challenges: "When we take the problem from school to home, we are actually giving or transferring the problem to the parents-we are actually sending the student to the streets."

Responding to what steps the administration took to deal with the most difficult students, Motto explained that in such circumstances, corporal punishment
was administered unless the parents had assigned "a right not to punish."

He explained that suspension was uncommon at Molo. Other alternatives to suspension including keeping a student in an isolation room were being used instead.

**Principal's Perception of Suspensions**

Mr. Taratibu explained that the school worked closely with the Child Welfare Clinic. Suspensions were rare at Molo Middle School. According to the district policy any student involved in a fight was supposed to be suspended for five days. In contrast, under the school policy students engaged in minor fights were recommended for counseling. Motto indicated that he liked the suspension policy because "It gives me something to put the behavior in check." When asked if there were things he did not like about the policy or would like to see changed, Motto said, "No, because I have control. I decide the number of days a student will be suspended. In addition, I had input in formulation of the district suspension policy."

**Principal's Administration of Discipline**

During observation a small incident occurred which confirmed Mr. Taratibu's words. During changing of classes, Tanya, a student, went to another student called Malaika, and told her that she did not like her. Tanya said other mean words to Malaika who reported the matter to Mr. Taratibu. The two girls and their witness were summoned to the principal's office. Mr. Taratibu asked Tanya to narrate what
Malaika had done to her. After she finished, Motto asked Tanya whether Malaika had offended her in any way "to deserve those mean words." Tanya answered that Malaika had done nothing, but other girls had incited her. "Do you see that you are being used by others to cause trouble? If somebody came to you and told you mean words would you like it?" Mr. Taratibu recited to Tanya a number of similar incidents she had been involved in and told her he would give her one more chance to change her behavior. Tanya, who was expecting the worst, started to cry and apologized to Malaika. Mr. Taratibu told Tanya to keep away from those friends who were inciting her. The girls were dismissed. Motto then explained to me that Tanya was in special education class, and had been in trouble on a number of occasions.

During my third day of observation, two students were brought into Motto's office. One of the students insulted another student and a hot argument ensued that could have developed into a fight had one of the teachers not been near. Motto called Jack, the assistant principal. They both talked to the two students. "What must you do Oloo when you feel angry? What does our guideline say? Was there a better way you could have responded to Kamau instead of insulting him?" After each question Oloo answered. After talking to the boys for half an hour, the tension between them was defused. Oloo apologized to Kamau and the two left the office as friends.

During my observations, I noted that Motto was like a father to the students. He interacted with them easily. He made them feel they were important and valued.
The students knew that Motto cared for them. During the lunch break, I noted that students went to Motto or Jack and poured out their hearts to them. They seemed to get care and consolation that they could not have received elsewhere.

Another incident occurred during my second observation which involved two students. One student had a dollar and another student claimed that the dollar had been taken from him. The two students started to quarrel. Mr. Taratibu tried to intervene but one student, Kimani was so furious that he cursed and threatened James five times in Motto's presence. This prompted Motto to call Kimani's father. When Kimani's father arrived, Mr. Taratibu narrated the incident and it was revealed that Kimani had been given a dollar that morning. Kimani's father explained that the boy was going through a very hard time because the parents were going through a divorce. After a long discussion Kimani's father was told to go with the boy and talk to him at home. The greatest mistake he had made was cursing five times in front of Motto. Kimani was suspended for a day.

I saw about ten students in Mr. Taratibu's office, and as I was wondering what they wanted, Mr. Taratibu informed me that the students were being issued tardiness cards. After students were issued three cards for cutting class, they were suspended for three days. In that particular day, the ten students had been late for classes and all had received more than three cards. The students were issued letters of suspension. Before being sent home, the students were told to call their parents on the telephone and tell them that they had been suspended.
Mr. Taratibu strongly believed that parental involvement was critical in minimizing discipline challenges in a school. As Motto put it, "the more visible the parents are, the less discipline problems we have. Children whose parents do not come to school cause a problem". Motto explained that Molo Middle School had a school-wide discipline program that had been formulated by teachers and students.

Concerning their school-wide discipline program, Mr. Taratibu said that each class had submitted its discipline plan to the principal's office for approval. Once the plan had been approved, the students were deemed to be more committed to the discipline plan because they had formulated their own, rather than having one imposed by the administration. Teachers reinforced the discipline program by talking about particular issues of the plan every day for five minutes before classes began. Motto and his assistant principal talked about issues on the school-wide discipline program during the morning assembly on Monday morning. In such an assembly, students were reminded of school's expectations. In addition, Motto said:

We have teamed up all of our students. For instance, the seventh graders belong to a team. When parents are called for a conference, all teachers team up together and inform the parents about the student's general conduct. The student's strengths and weaknesses are discussed. If the student had committed some offense, a decision concerning the penalty to be administered is made. For instance, if the student is a first offender, corporal punishment could be suggested.... If he is a habitual offender, in-school suspension could be recommended. Molo has few discipline problems. Jack and I and the teachers work as a team and we let the children know that. I support my teachers 100% whether the teacher is right or wrong. If the teacher reports a student, I will believe what he or she has to tell me and act accordingly. If I find the teacher was wrong, it is my duty to call the teacher and we correct the matter later.
Principal's Administration of Suspensions

When asked how the number of suspensions were affected by the school district policy on suspension, Motto told me that such a record could be available in the central office. However, he admitted the number of suspensions at the school level were affected by the district suspension policy that stipulated offenses which warranted suspension or expulsion. For instance, the district's policy clearly indicated that students who were caught with weapons or drugs and those who had been suspended for bad behavior or had been disrespectful to teachers several times had to be expelled. I requested a copy of the district's suspension policy and compared it to a copy of the "housekeeping suspension policy" and found differences. Housekeeping was the school's code of conduct. I found it to be more accommodating than the district's suspension policy for it expanded certain sections that were vague in the district policy. For instance, while fighting was put under different levels in the "housekeeping" policy, which included minor "fights" and serious fights which involved injuries, the district categorized all levels under "fight" and clearly stated students caught in a fight had to be suspended.

When I asked Motto what worked best for the student, in-school or out-of-school suspensions, he indicated that in-school suspensions worked better if there were enough financial and physical resources. For instance, Molo had only one person that was designated to work with in-school suspension students. Motto explained that Molo Middle School suspended 40 students a semester. The criteria
used for suspending students centered around fighting, drugs and disrespect to teachers.

In-school suspensions were preferred over out-of-school because the student was not removed completely from the school premises and could complete his/her assignments. It was also preferred because the principal did not run the risk of sending the students into the streets. Even though the students are supposed to go home to their parents, they usually ended up in the streets because the parents are not at home. Motto concluded by saying that Molo Middle School preferred other alternatives to suspension like counseling and other teacher disciplinary techniques.

Summary of Principal's Activities

Mr. Taratibu was a warm, friendly and caring principal. He regarded the needs of students as top priority and treated students with respect. Motto believed that rituals and traditions symbolize what Molo Middle School represented. Students were regarded as adults and were expected to be responsible for their behavior. In dealing with discipline challenges, Mr. Taratibu used his long experience in dealing with students and his understanding of the community from which the students came. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 and Table 5.6 illustrate and summarize the data analysis according to Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence Model (1980).
Figure 5.4. Domain Analysis for Motto.
Figure 5.6. Taxonomic Analysis for Motto
Table 5.6. Summary for Motto's Dimensions of Contrast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Contrast</th>
<th>Impact on Students and Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motto's Major Administrative Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Warm, friendly and visionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Relationship</td>
<td>Freely interacts with a caring attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>Supports teachers 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/ Community Relationship</td>
<td>Involves parents and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility In the School</td>
<td>Is highly visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Style</td>
<td>Democratic transformational type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Uses suspension as the last option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jack Tayari, Assistant Principal at Molo Middle School

Mr. Tayari was an African-American, in his late 40's, and had two adult child

Before becoming an administrator, he worked in the army for over ten

years, and then became an assistant principal and a football coach at Molo Middle

School. He believed strongly that discipline must be upheld in an institution in

order for learning to take place. "The administration has to be consistent in the

administration of discipline and make sure the students clearly know and

understand what is expected of them, otherwise things will get out of hand."

Background Information

Mr. Jack Tayari presented himself as a professional whose main objective

was to carry out his duties efficiently. He described himself as a good listener. He
said it was critical for the administrator not only to listen to teachers and parents but also to the students. By listening one might understand the underlying motive for a behavior or event. Although Jack was a soft spoken individual, he was a determined person. He also described himself as a firm and fair administrator, a fact he said was well known by all the students at the school.

He believed a successful principal was a hard worker. He said, as a former officer in the United States Army, he was well aware of the importance of discipline as a key to achievement. His main goal was to do what it took to make Molo Middle School a better school than it was when he found it. He pointed out that without discipline, nothing could be achieved.

Mr. Tayari was an "outsider" at Molo Middle School in that he was born, raised and educated in Michigan. After retiring from the army, he came to Ziwani to take the position of an assistant principal and a football coach. He said he felt very comfortable working with Motto because they shared a "similar philosophy and vision." Jack explained that unlike many assistant principals who did nothing else apart from dealing with disciplinary challenges at school, he and Motto shared administrative responsibilities equally.

During my observation, I noted Motto and Jack were consulting with each other on many issues. In one incident, a parent who had been summoned to school to discuss his son's behavior was received by both Jack and Motto. In the course of the meeting, I noted the principal and the assistant principal both consulted with each other from time to time. Later on Jack told me:
When teachers and students realize we work as a team, they then are more likely to rally behind us and as the saying goes-united we stand. Mr. Taratibu and I stand united and the teachers respect us for that and rally behind us. Once the students find out that the staff is united they cannot have room to misbehave. This is because we articulate the same values and norms and can easily rally teachers behind us and make a united stand.

Assistant Principal's Perception of Discipline

Mr. Tayari used different strategies to address discipline challenges in the school. He said the strategies were determined by a specific situation, the magnitude of the challenge, and the student presenting the challenge. For instance, he explained that if a discipline challenge was caused by a first offender, a habitual offender, or a notorious offender, each category would be handled quite differently.

This notion was confirmed during observation. One student was sent to Jack's office for having insulted another student. Jack had a 15 minute talk with the student. The student was told to bring his parent the following day because he had formed a habit of insulting other students. Jack explained to me that if this was a first offense, the student would just have been recommended for counseling or sent to discipline clinic. When I asked Jack what caused students to be disruptive, he said,

At this developmental stage of these students, what others say and think about one is the most critical thing. As a result student's behavior is greatly influenced by peers. A student may act in a certain way to prove he is tough to his peers or to earn praise. In this school, rarely do students misbehave due to lack of academic challenges since most of our students are high achievers. In fact, I can honestly say that we do not have major discipline challenges here.
During my observation in the hallways, classrooms, cafeteria and in the auditorium, I did not see students displaying behavior that warranted discussion. When I asked Jack what was his main concern regarding discipline challenges in the school, he answered that he did not have any particular concern. He explained that many of the students at the school were academically focused and knew why they were in school. He admitted there were some small fights which were normal for students of this age. In such circumstances, alternatives to suspensions, like counseling, were administered.

Mr. Tayari believed suspensions were helpful but not the best way to deal with discipline challenges. He pointed out that in-school suspensions worked better than out-of-school suspensions because they had less stigma and also enabled the students to complete their school work. In addition, they kept the students out of the streets.

During the interview, Mr. Tayari stressed the importance of a school-wide discipline program. He explained that students, teachers and parents had made contributions in developing the program. He explained that the teachers articulated the importance of a school-wide discipline program and discussed different parts of the plan with students in the classrooms, which ensured that students understood what was expected of them. Students in Molo Middle School had been divided in different teams, which provided individual students with a forum through which they could present their concerns.

Concerning administrative support for teachers, Jack indicated that he and Mr. Tayari were supporting teachers 100%. They made sure that students were
aware that "teachers and the office made a unified stand." Jack believed that the principal could not maintain discipline in a school without the support of teachers:

It is a reciprocal kind of support. The principal has to support teachers, for in turn, needs their support. Moreover, consistency is an important ingredient in maintaining discipline. If students note a difference between administration and teachers, then they will exploit that difference. In order to control students and maintain discipline, a unified stand is critical. Teachers and administrators must speak the same language, perform the same rituals and traditions.

During my observation I noted a free interaction between Jack and the teachers. A number of teachers went to Mr. Tayari's office with various needs. Two teachers wanted certain information concerning teaching material they had ordered. Their conversation with Mr. Tayari was warm and friendly. They were both provided with the material they needed. In the hallway, cafeteria or the auditorium, Jack interacted with the teachers and students freely, treating them with respect.

**Assistant Principal's Perception of Suspensions**

When I asked Mr. Tayari to tell me about the school's suspension policy, he explained that the school was connected to the Child Welfare Clinic. If a student was a habitual offender, constantly involved in small fights or quarrels, he or she was referred to the clinic for counseling. Jack added, "The district code of conduct stated that if a student was involved in a fight, he or she had to be suspended for five days."

Mr. Tayari believed the suspension policy was good because it provided a guideline for the administrator. The policy protected administrators against litigation. When I requested a copy of the district discipline policy and compared it with the school discipline policy, I noted in the parish policy there were four
offenses under which a student was liable for suspension. These offenses were rather vague while the school discipline policy was more flexible and specific. While the district discipline policy listed fighting as an offense that warranted suspension, the school discipline policy explained the nature and the "magnitude of fighting" and specified various levels of "fights" which were treated differently, making it more difficult to suspend students.

**Assistant Principal's Administration of Discipline**

When I asked Jack to tell me whether there were some things he did not like about the policy and would like to see changed, he said he did not like the policy because "of the fact that we always begin with the maximum penalty." However, he added that one of the things he did like about the policy was that it gave the principal a guideline within which to operate.

When I inquired about the number of suspensions affected by school district policy, Jack said that it was hard to know since the records were in the central office. He explained that Molo Middle School followed the district discipline policy as closely as possible, but the school discipline policy was what was operational; it served the needs of the school better.

Mr. Tayari also pointed out that in-school suspensions could work better for students if there were enough personnel to support the students. For instance, a school like Molo Middle School needed to hire eight extra personnel in order for in-school suspension to be effective. Because of a lack of adequate personnel, Molo Middle School did not have an effective in-school suspensions. This was because only one teacher was designated for suspensions. Luckily Molo, being a magnet
school, attracted many good students who were academically focused.

Jack believed that the suspension policy was made more effective by the fact that principal, teachers, parents and students were full participants in its formulation. This increased the commitment of all the parties concerned to the terms and conditions of the policy. Teachers constantly reminded the students what was expected of them according to the policy.

Assistant Principal's Administration of Suspensions

During the interview, Jack disclosed that on average, 40 students were suspended a semester at Molo Middle School. Drugs, disrespect for teachers, or fighting were the reasons students had been suspended.

Repeating his earlier support for the advantage of in-school suspension over out-of-school suspension, Jack said that when out-of-school suspension was administered, students were out on the streets because their parents were at work. Molo Middle School used other alternatives to suspensions such as disciplinary techniques and counseling. Table 5.7 shows similarities and differences between Motto and Jack.

Pwani Junior High School

The School Setting.

The two-story red-brick building was clean, well-planned and attractive to the eye. The landscaping around the school was beautiful and the grass in the large compound where the school stood was freshly mowed. The facility consisted of five main buildings and a smaller section behind the cafeteria for the eighth graders. The
four main buildings contained classrooms, the office complex, the library, the cafeteria and the auditorium which was located between the halls.

Pwani Junior High School stands elegantly on a 15 acre compound. From what I learned from the president of the student council, the school was the second largest and is the most beautiful campus in the school district. At first I thought Pwani was a high school because of its large size. My first assumption was not far from the truth, for when I spoke to one of the dean of students, I learned that the school was built in 1926 as a high school for whites and that was the reason why it had such a large area. It was converted to a middle school specifically for African-Americans in 1977. The office was large, and well organized. There were four secretaries in the general office with computers. One corner of the office was decorated tastefully with trophies that had been won, awards that had been earned and photographs of eventful moments that had taken place in the history of the school. These items portrayed the school's pride. Just before entering the main office a poster read "Alone we can do so little but together we can do so much."

The principal's office was to the right side of the general office. The office was large and clean with three chairs and a couch. Decorated tastefully, photographs and other personal items were placed on the desk. The principal's office was pleasant. Among the offices I visited, this seemed to be the most executive. Although the furniture was the standard government issue it seemed much more fashionable because of its tasteful arrangement.
Britt Kiongozi, Principal of Pwani Junior High School

Mr. Kiongozi was a white male in his mid 40's, married and had three children. Prior to being transferred to Pwani Junior High School, Britt had been a principal for 15 years in another school that was a mile away from Pwani Junior High School. Britt had a masters degree in education administration and was writing his dissertation to complete his doctorate degree in education administration. During his senior year in undergraduate school, where he majored in Journalism, Britt felt frustrated by what was going on in the school of journalism. After graduation, he decided to get into education and got a job as a fifth grade teacher. He realized that he liked teaching and went back to school to obtain a degree in elementary education. He then worked in the central office for two years before he applied for a principalship.

Mr. Kiongozi replaced a man who had been the principal at Pwani Junior High for 18 years. The replacement was not a smooth one since the former principal was transferred by the superintendent against his will. Britt and the former principal had known each other well which made things easier for Britt because the former principal told the teachers that "Mr. Kiongozi was a good man, but it was the superintendent who had initiated the transfer." By saying this, the former principal showed his confidence in Britt which in turn, made the teachers more supportive of the change.
At first, the parents were a little resistant to the move but as time passed, they accepted Britt. Students were a little antagonistic but the antagonism was diffused within two months. "One thing I do well is get along with kids. Our relationship flourished quickly," said Mr. Kiongozi. When asked to describe himself as an administrator, Britt said:

I see myself as a facilitator. I see my job as serving the teachers. I am not a very authoritative person. I think I understand that the most important thing that goes on here is the interaction of the teachers and the children and everybody else is to help that go well.

When I asked Britt to tell me some of the challenges he faced as an administrator, he said:

The most important challenge is money. Our teacher-pupil ratio is high. The physical plant needs some repair. We have our own football field, we have our own baseball field, we have our own gymnasium, auditorium, and track field. It is a beautiful campus of 15 acres but it has not had any major renovations. I would say that money for the physical plant is a big challenge--there are sections that have been destroyed by termites and all sorts of things. I would also like to have more flexibility in teaching if I had more teachers, which I do not.... We could offer more courses. At the moment, we have about 55 teachers which include ancillary staff. We have a staff ratio of probably one teacher for 26 students which does not give us any flexibility at all. Twenty years ago, the ratio was one teacher for 20 students. From that you can see that this school probably needs six more teachers which means there is a lot of other things I could do but cannot do due to shortage of teachers.

Mr. Kiongozi continued to explain that the other challenge facing the school was the lack of adequate learning materials. For instance, the school had 25 computers in the laboratory that did not have hard drives. He said what they actually had was a word-processing lab. He also added that the school was not air conditioned due to the lack
of financial resources. "So you see these kinds of frustrations. But I think in spite of the shortcomings we have, we are doing very well," he added.

Table 5.7 Summary of Similarities and Differences Between Motto and Jack

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motto</th>
<th>Jack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has a vision of making Molo Middle School to be the best school in Ziwani School District</td>
<td>Has a vision of making Molo Middle School to be the best in Ziwani School District both academically and socially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects, cares and interacts with students in a fatherly manner</td>
<td>Respects and cares for the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves teachers, parents and students in decision making</td>
<td>Believes in the involvement of teachers, students and parents in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in establishing a conducive atmosphere for learning</td>
<td>Believes in establishing routine and, once in place, there should be consistency in following it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to students' concerns and does his best to address them</td>
<td>Listens to students' concerns and does his best to address them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views suspension as helpful sometimes</td>
<td>Views suspension as helpful for maintaining discipline in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports teachers 100% on disciplinary matters whether the teacher is wrong or not</td>
<td>Supports teachers 100%, for discipline is a joint venture and without teachers' support the administration cannot maintain discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is very visible in the school and interacts with students easily</td>
<td>Is very visible in the school and interacts with students easily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When addressing administrative challenges, Britt pointed out that he first enlisted the cooperation of the staff. In August of 1991, he took a break and invited all the staff members for a retreat where he asked them "to come up with problem
solving strategies." They came up with three strengths and one area of struggle. The strengths were, that the school had experienced teachers, the physical plant had great potential and the school had varied offerings. Discipline was listed as the only area of struggle.

Following that retreat, a couple of things were done differently. Teachers were put into cadres or teams so that a team of teachers could be responsible for a certain number of students. Most of the lessons were conducted in classrooms close to the main office where students' movement could easily be monitored. A demerit system was put into effect and was working very well. Lastly, a small multiple step process for teachers which included parent contact was put into effect.

In effect what we said to teachers was before you contact us, contact the student. Then contact the parent if the behavior persists. What we have now is a lot of parents inside the school building.

The Community

Pwani Junior High School was located in a large metropolitan community. It was just a few miles from the city's center. The school was surrounded by what looks like middle class residential houses. I later learned that the community of Pwani ranged from retired middle class, the elderly, to lower socioeconomic status. At one time the majority of the people living in Pwani were whites, but as more African-Americans moved in the area, some whites moved out. When I visited Pwani, half the residents were African-American and half were white. The school was located near Pratt Drive just a short distance from Interstate 610.
The school had an enrollment of 1007 students of whom 99.6% were African-American and less than 1% white and others. Seventy-five percent of the students in the school were bused from other school districts and only 25% of the students came from the neighborhood. More than 99% of the students in the school were on the school free lunch program— an indication that they came from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The students were well-behaved in the classrooms, auditorium, the cafeteria, and library. However, they were not well behaved in the hallway and during recess. There was a lot of commotion, pushing, pulling and hitting as they walked along the hallway. I overheard name calling between some students as they ran through the hallways to avoid demerits. The demerit system took points away from students who did not report to class on time.

While some students would try to avoid demerits by running quickly through the hallway, other students seemed not to care and were walking slowly, while others were standing in small groups talking. There were some students who were locked out and were told to line up in a single file. I was anxious to know what would happen to them and was informed that they would be asked to pick up paper in the school compound in addition to being given demerits. This notion was soon confirmed when I saw a student picking up paper instead of being in the classroom. I was told he was being punished for a minor offense he had committed which did
not warrant suspension. I learned that after one got 80 demerits, he or she was liable for suspension for about three days.

During my observations I saw some people who wore green uniforms and were moving up and down the hallways monitoring students. I was curious to know who they were and was informed they were the school security people who were offering their service voluntarily. Their duties were to work with the principal and the deans to monitor the students. Students could not skip classes easily because the principal, the dean and the school security were in every corner of the school. Their visibility intensified during recess time, for class change, and in the cafeteria. Their visibility acted like a buffer to those students who would have otherwise misbehaved.

I noted that all the students wore uniforms. I had not seen students wearing uniforms in other schools. They looked smart and it appeared that wearing uniforms may have had some influence on their behavior and their learning.

Mr. Kiongozi allowed me to talk to Jackie, the president of the student council so that I could "have a feel of the students'" perception of the school. On inquiring how students felt about wearing uniforms, Jackie told me that students had mixed feelings. There were students who felt their freedom to choose had been taken away and there were others who preferred wearing uniforms. In general, the majority of the students preferred wearing uniforms for it decreased unnecessary competition among the students and, as Jackie put it, "placed everyone on the same footing-rich or poor."
In order to find out how the students felt having a white principal and a white assistant principal, Jackie said:

Our former principal was an African-American and had been in this school for 19 years. He was a good man but many of the students felt that change was necessary. Doug, our former principal, had been in this school for a long time and had outlived his usefulness in that he had run out of new ideas. We needed a structure in the school which was lacking. Many students were walking the streets instead of being in their classes. I think he was too good and many students and teachers took advantage of him.

Mr. Kiongozi is strict and fair and I think at this age we need that kind of atmosphere. When Mr. Kiongozi came to this school he introduced the demerit system, the cadre (or teaming) and this school had been turned upside down.

According to the records obtained from the central office Pwani had an average 13% of the total number of students suspended for years: 1992-1993, 1993-1994 and 1994-1995. In all the four schools I visited, Pwani had the largest student population and was the only junior high school.

The Faculty

The faculty of the school consisted of the principal, the assistant principal, two deans of students, three counselors, four secretaries, eight security men, a maintenance/janitorial staff of 15 and about 54 teachers. Because of the large number of students in the school everything was done in a big way. For instance, during lunch time six teachers plus four security men were required to cover the various posts on the duty schedule. The security men and women were volunteers.

Mr. Kiongozi indicated that the faculty had been fairly stable for ten years. He pointed out that there were teachers who had been at Pwani Junior High School for 19 years. Some former teachers at Pwani Junior High School had
transferred. The two deans had been at the school the longest. In addition to their reputation as disciplinarians, the two deans were outstanding football coaches who had brought great fame to Pwani Junior High School.

Mr. Kiongozi indicated that the school previously had a bad reputation because of the lack of discipline, but it had been "turned around by a committed staff and working with the members of the community," Britt's strong personality may have sent a message to the old teachers in the school that it was time to change or leave.

Mr. Kiongozi pointed out he had no difficulty in finding new teachers. He stated that Pwani Junior High School was an extremely desirable place to work, and that there was a waiting list of teachers who wanted to teach there. He seemed to be politically connected, and Pwani Junior High School was evidently one of the top middle schools in the district. Moreover, Britt added that he networked well with the central office and was sure of getting their support any time. Britt was able to work within the organizational structure of the district and had been around long enough to know the system.

I could not understand why both Britt and Barbie were posted in a school that was predominantly African-American. I inquired as to why the principal and assistant principal were white in a school that was predominantly African-American, Mr. Kiongozi was quick to say he and Barbie were at Pwani because the community supported them. He explained cautiously the state of the school before he came and how things have changed. "When you do your work efficiently,
race becomes immaterial. We have been receiving telephone calls from people of all races telling us what a good job we have done," Brill explained.

During my observation I talked to one of the dean who proudly showed us around the school. During informal conversation I asked him how he viewed the fact that although the school was predominantly African-American the principal and the assistant principal were white. He explained:

The move to transfer the former principal, who was African-American, and transferring Mr. Kiongozi to Pwani was politically motivated. Do not get me wrong, Mr. Kiongozi is a good and able leader but the former principal was also a good and able leader. I think the size, the location and the reputation of this school makes it open to politics. I believe there is a political move to make it a magnet school. Right now Pwani is the largest middle school in this district. If Pwani becomes a magnet school, the number of African-American students will decrease. That is what I think is going to happen. As you have seen, the school has a very large area for expansion. It has a football stadium of its own. I predict that renovation work may begin in the next few months.

I thought this was an interesting case of discordant perception. The dean was an African-American. It is intriguing to see how he perceived things. It is possible that I would have received a different view if I talked with a white dean.

Principal's Perception of Discipline

Mr. Kiongozi explained that discipline at Pwani was no longer a concern. The introduction of the demerit system, parent involvement and, in-school suspensions had proven to be effective strategies in dealing with discipline challenges. At that time, there was an intercom message in which the dean announced that the school was going to have a "round up." Round up was a time when a bell to mark the end of class period would be rung. Students would be
expected to change for the next class in five minutes. During round up teachers would close their classroom doors after five minutes and those students who would be out would be counted as late and therefore would be given demerits. Following the announcement, the bell rang and the teachers locked the doors. Students ran in all directions to their next classrooms to avoid demerits. However, there were students who did not care and just walked. Some other students stood in small groups unconcerned with what was happening. Britt viewed disruptive behavior as something that emerged from the developmental dynamics that took place in the teenagers.

At this age level, the adolescents are a little crazy. They are at a critical transition period between childhood and adulthood. Today they may be adults and tomorrow children. At this stage they need structure. They cannot handle a lot of decisions. You cannot give them a lot of choice; what they actually need is a structured atmosphere. For instance, we give them only two choices for lunch—hot lunch or a sandwich. That is the number of choices they can handle. The idea is to limit the field of choice for them at this age.

In his response to the question regarding some of his greatest concerns on discipline in the school, Britt indicated that what was happening in the community was his greatest concern. He commented that what happened in the community ended up in school—drugs, weapons, fights in the neighborhood all spilled over to school. Mr. Britt Kiongozi added that what most people believed was that school creates society, and in a sense, he agreed with this assumption. But what he believed was stronger was school reflects society. He commented:

We live in a very violent society here in Pwani, and it is a real scary time. I have two daughters, and it's scary to raise teenagers. If adults do not spend

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time with teenagers, it is really easy for them to stumble and fall. Many teenagers do not get a lot of structure. That is probably my biggest concern.

Mr. Kiongozi indicated that he hated to suspend students but at times had no alternative. Students were unconditionally suspended for only one reason and that was fighting. Students could not "get off a fight unless they had time to cool off" and therefore, had to go home for a few days. Those students who got 80 demerits in a quarter were suspended for three days. The demerit system was also a school-wide discipline policy. Students had to wear school uniforms every school day, respect other people's property, report to school on time and attend all their classes. Failure to adhere to these rules resulted in receiving demerits. One had to break many rules to get 80 demerits. A student got different demerits for different offenses. For instance, if a student was late for a class he or she got five demerits.

A new in-school suspension program to enforce the demerit system had been started. In the new program, students were required to go to school on Saturday where they would spend five to six hours with a staff member who would supervise their projects. Mr. Kiongozi indicated that in-school suspension was advantageous to students because it allowed them to complete their assignments. It also gave students a sense of awareness of what was happening in the school through completing their projects. There were things that the school could not condone such as fighting and drugs.

A new program that had been recently implemented as an alternative to suspension involved students going to school on Saturdays and spending between...
three and four hours. During that time, the students performed emotional types of exercises that focused on confidence and a decision making process. Those who failed to turn up on Saturday were suspended on Monday. "You have to have structure and be consistent. We make sure students know what is expected of them," said Britt.

When asked how he dealt with the most undisciplined student in the school, Mr. Kiongozi explained that presently the school did not have those kinds of students but had many in the previous years. We found that making a bargain with such a student was most productive. The student was told that he would get some of the things he wanted, but not everything. He had to give the teachers some of the things the teachers required. Many students responded more to such a bargain than to force and threats. Britt said that he also found:

if you can get people to sit down and talk to them you have a decent chance of response. I think what we tend to do with those kids is to tell them -- "You will listen -- or I will punish you "-- these kids are at the edge anyway - - You can never scare them.

In many cases the principal, teachers, counselor and social worker tried to work very closely with such students. At times, such a student was matched to a teacher with whom the student got along. The school also tried to work closely with the parent of such students. Stressing the importance of parent involvement, Britt said:

Parent involvement in school affairs is very important. We have succeeded in all projects in which we have involved parents. We make contracts with parents. We also have assigned students to a team of teachers. Teaming or "cadre, "is important in that when a parent is summoned to school he or she gets feedback about the students from all the teachers instead of meeting with each teacher on different days.
Pwani Junior High School had a school wide-discipline policy. First, it had the code of conduct from the district. Second, it had the school code which had been formulated by the principal, teachers, parents, students and other community members. In addition, each class had a code of five cordial rules. The code of conduct that was operational in the school had been divided into three classes. Class one included basically minor problems that involved breaking classroom rules. If a student persistently committed an offense in class one, the parent was contacted. If a student committed an offense in class two, it meant the offense was more serious and the student was suspended for three to five days. Class three category was the most serious for it involved weapons or drugs. A student who committed such an offense was expelled from school.

Mr. Kiongozi strongly believed in supporting teachers. He indicated that he listened to teachers and made the students aware that the administration supported teachers all the time and worked together as a team. If a parent failed to come to school within three days after being summoned by the teacher, the administration called the parent. "We do what the teachers ask," Britt said. He also explained that a teacher was selected from each grade level to act as a dean of the students. The teachers were willing to take more students in their classes so that they could get more support from the administrator.
Principal's Perception of Suspensions

Mr. Kiongozi said that he did not like suspending students. However, he liked the policy because it was "clear cut" and gave the principal directions on what to do with different kinds of suspensions. He stated:

I like the fact that I know, the parent knows, the district knows what the rules are. I think if you lean too much on what the book tells you to do, the number of suspensions will be very high. I still need to have my subjectivity as the principal. I shall need to be able to make a call and say no, son you are going home or no I am not going to send you home. I need to have the flexibility of saying that. However it helps to have the code of conduct written down.

Britt said he did not like the policy when it was first introduced because the principals were supposed to follow it strictly. That directive did not last for long because many principals complained.

He indicated he would have liked to have seen an alternative school that accommodated students. He explained that a lot of times when a student was expelled he or she could stay out of school for the whole year which was detrimental to their academic work. He continued:

If there was an alternative school to which this student could be referred, it could not only enable him/her to complete school assignments, but also give the student time to deal with the problem he/she is having. Whenever a child is going this far there is something going on whether it is emotional, social or physical and we need to work with those problems.

When asked to explain how the number of suspensions at the school level were affected by the district suspension policy, Britt said that if the principal followed the policy strictly the number of suspensions would increase tremendously.
In many cases, principals used their discretion. Sometimes a student was suspended for a day even though the policy warranted a three day suspension. Britt added,

I think part of what we do in education we try to person proof things to make it so that anybody can do it but in reality you cannot do that. Adults should have the ability to make judgement and if you make a wrong judgement as we sometimes do, for the sake of the student it is all right."

Commenting on what worked best for students, in-school suspension or out-of school suspension, Britt said "it depended on what was best for the students." He indicated that when students were engaged in a fight, they just had to go home and "cool off" and were not allowed to be back to school without being accompanied by their parents. Britt stressed that there was no leeway for fighting. He continued to explain that in-school suspension worked better for most other offenses if there was a structured program in which students participated. The good thing with in-school suspension was that it kept the student on the school premises. Britt said that the suspension policy at Pwani Junior High School was effective but could be greatly improved if human and financial resources were increased. He continued to explain:

The best way of formulating a comprehensive discipline policy was involving everyone—principal, deans, teachers, parents, students and the community members at large, and ask them what they could see as the problems. If that was done, then everyone would be supportive.

**Principal's Administration of Discipline**

Responding to the question on the number of students suspended in a semester, Britt said that on average about 100 students, but the number keeps changing. The criteria for suspension of students included fights, threats of fights and violence. When a student got 80 demerits he/she was also suspended. This mainly resulted when a student habitually became uncooperative by either continuously
being late or not submitting material in time. The last criteria under which students were suspended was in a situation where both the teacher and the student needed a break from each other and as Britt put it, "the student was getting on the teacher's nerves and the teacher was getting into the student's nerves." The alternative programs that had been started in the school included in-school suspension and counseling. In in-school suspension students were kept in different rooms where they could complete their assignments from Monday to Friday, or they went to school on Saturday for three to four hours. Apart from being kept in isolation, the students were also given some work to do on the school premises.

Principal's Administration of Suspensions

On inquiring about school suspension, Mr. Kiongozi explained:

Some suspensions were helpful but not all. Suspension can only be helpful if they are done right. For instance, where fights are involved, suspension is the best way. Students need time to reflect and cool off. If the victims are not sent home, the fight will continue the following day and so on mainly due to peer pressure.

Mr. Kiongozi explained that most students fear being sent home because of "what mom and dad are going to do." They fear interrupting their parents' lives.

Summary of Principal's Activities.

Mr. Britt Kiongozi believed that listening to students' concerns and making the students know what was expected of them was a crucial step in addressing discipline challenges. Britt asked the students what they thought about programs before the programs were implemented in school. He also considered parental involvement in school activities as critical in minimizing school discipline challenges.
he rarely uses lists & involves disciplines available to teachers & students influences community to support community suspension available to teachers & students available to teachers & students flexible, supportive & visionary his program is available to teachers & students student

Figure 5.7. Domain Analysis for Britt.
Cooperation is a way of involving parents in activities, involving students in formulation of rules in decision making, taking risks, curricular matter, sharing vision, constantly being present, being seen in cafeteria, helping teachers, involving teacher, involving students, involving rules, involving schedule, involving vision, involving community.

Communication is a way of involving teachers, involving students, involving parents, involving community.

Figure 5.8. Taxonomic Analysis for Britt
### Table 5.8 Summary for Britt's Dimensions of Contrasts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Contrasts</th>
<th>Impact on Students and Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Britt's Major Administrative Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Warm, friendly and strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Relationship</td>
<td>Involves students in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>Supports teachers and teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Community Relationship</td>
<td>Involves parents and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility in the School</td>
<td>Reasonably visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Style</td>
<td>Facilitator, democratic &amp; innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Only when fighting is involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A summary of the data analysis for Mr. Kiongozi is shown in Figures 5.7, 5.8, and Table 5.8.

**Assistant Principal of Pwani Junior High School**

Mrs. Barbie Mtukutu, Assistant Principal of Pwani Junior High School, was white and in her mid 40's. She was warm, friendly and was an extremely intense woman with a very strong personality. She wanted to be a teacher since she was in elementary school. She has a master's degree and 30 hours plus. She had taught at two middle schools in the state of Alabama before she came to Pwani Junior High School as a teacher. After teaching for three years at Pwani Junior High School, the post of assistant principal became vacant and Barbie applied for it and was appointed to the post in 1992. Barbie was openly critical of the previous principal.
She said that the former principal lacked structure and "allowed things to slide." For instance, she pointed out that many of the residents of Pwani used to complain that students were roaming in the neighborhood instead of being in the classrooms. "We turned things around when we took over," she commented.

Mrs. Mtukutu had worked as an assistant principal before but lacked the confidence I had noted with other veteran assistant principals whom I had interviewed. This was understandable since experience is gained over time. When asked to describe herself as an administrator, she said:

I am a good listener and I deal with each situation as it emerges. By listening to both students and teachers I am able to detect the underlying causes to their problems before I act. The way I act is determined highly by both the situation and the magnitude of the event or happening. I like working with people. I'm what you call a volatile person. It's not so much that I'm out of control-- I just say what I think frankly.

Barbie said one of the greatest challenges she faced at Pwani Junior High School was how to instill self esteem in many of the students who, because of their many past failures, believed they could not make it. She explained that many of these students lacked good role models to emulate and had been constantly told they were not smart enough. Changing that mind set was what she had tried to do for the last three years and it was paying off with positive results.

Mrs. Mtukutu appeared to be defensive about the school. She was quick to say the school did not have any discipline problems and was directly critical of the former principal. She said before she and Mr. Kiongozi went to Pwani Junior High School, discipline challenges were out of proportion. She indicated that the former
principal allowed many things "to slide away." This situation had been rectified since Mr. Kiongozi and Mrs. Mtukutu took over the leadership at Pwani.

**Assistant Principal’s Perception of Discipline**

Barbie believed in involving students in formulating the school code of discipline as an effective strategy for addressing discipline challenges. To do this, she let the students know that they would be listened to and that teachers and the administrators cared for them. Once the students established confidence in teachers and administration, they disclosed the underlying causes to their problems. Being able to identify the behaviors that are disruptive was an important strategy. The administration asked for students' opinions and input before implementing any disciplinary programs. For instance, the student had to be involved in formulating the "demerit system " before its implementation. Students become more committed in a program they view as their own than one imposed upon them from top to bottom.

Expressing her opinion on what caused disruptive behavior, Barbie pointed out that every behavior served a purpose and the school had to analyze the function each behavior served. She explained that students brought problems to school from their neighborhood. "We encourage students to discuss with us everything that has happened in their neighborhood that might be disturbing them at school. We do this during the morning assembly and also during discussions held for ten minutes before classes begin," Barbie explained. She was concerned with identifying the behavior that was disruptive and being able to distinguish it from normal developmental
problems. Barbie said that suspension of a student was the last resort and before she administered it, she had to exhaust all other alternatives. In dealing with the most undisciplined student, Mrs. Barbie Mtukutu explained:

We try to diagnose the student's needs in terms of what are the underlying factors to the problem. We also try to find out whether the behaviors are positive or negative and whether it is intentional or unintentional. We try to match or team up such a student with the teacher whom he respects the most so that the two can work together. In addition, we try counseling techniques. Parent involvement was the most effective way of minimizing discipline problems in an institution. When parents are involved in school activities, students become aware that parents are aware of what is happening at school. We keep in touch with parents. We communicate with parents through telephone, letters, memos and parent-teacher conferences. When parents are involved in school activities there are minimal discipline problems. This school has a program that teams up students to a group of teachers. Teaming up is important because when parents come to school they get feedback from all the teachers.

What Mrs. Mtukutu had said was confirmed during my observations. Seven teachers plus the principal, the assistant principal and the two deans attended the meeting. After a few introductory comments, the principal narrated Jerome's behavior at school the previous day. Jerome had been disrespectful to two of his teachers. I attended a meeting in which a parent had been summoned to school by the principal. The matter was discussed at length. Each teacher gave his or her report about Jerome. A conclusion was reached that his behavior was to be under strict scrutiny for the following few weeks after which expulsion would follow if he continued to show disrespect. In-school suspension for three days was recommended for Jerome and the meeting ended.
Pwani Junior High School had a school-wide discipline program that had been formulated by the principal, teachers, parents, students and community members. In addition, the school had the district code of conduct. In the district code of conduct students who were engaged in fighting had to be suspended. The document was vague for it did not explain what kind of fight and under what circumstances. On the contrary, the school code explained different kinds of fights and under what circumstances a student had to be suspended making it less likely for a student to be suspended.

**Assistant Principal’s Perception of Suspensions**

Mrs. Mtukutu did not like to suspend any student. However, she believed that the suspension policy was good because it provided the principal with a yardstick to administer disciplinary measures. "When the student understands what is expected and not expected, the policy becomes a guide on what to do when different rules are violated and provides the administrator with different kinds of suspension to fit the offense," Barbie continued.

However, Barbie wanted certain parts of the suspension policy changed or modified. Establishing alternative schools could greatly enhance learning. Some students who had been suspended eventually were expelled. If there were alternative schools where such students could go, it would not only help them academically, but would also give them time to deal with their behavior.

Mrs. Mtukutu indicated that she would like to change the section that stated after a student was expelled he or she was not to be allowed back to school without being accompanied by the parent. She viewed that particular section to be
strict and unrealistic because the family dynamics kept on changing and at times the nature of work prevented the parents from coming to school.

Responding to the question on how school suspensions were affected by district suspension policy, Barbie admitted that in general they were greatly affected. She went on to explain that the number of suspensions and expulsions had greatly declined with the introduction of "project respect" which stresses the importance of individual students developing self-respect. It is believed that in order for one to respect others he/she must first develop self-respect.

In-school suspension was said to work better than out-of-school suspension in that although the student was removed from the class he/she was still within the school premises and had an opportunity to complete class assignments. In-school suspension also had less of a stigma. However, in-school suspension worked only if there was a well-structured program in which the students fully participated.

Barbie believed the suspension policies that were more effective were those that had been formulated by all the participants. She stressed that the suspension policy at Pwani Junior High School was successful because principal, teachers, parents and students were all important contributors during its formulation. The greatest setback for implementing the suspension policy emerged in situations where the administration formulated the policy without having consulted teachers, student, parent and the community, and yet passed it to the teachers for its implementation. When teachers, students, parents and community members are
involved in formulation of the suspension policy, they gain ownership and are more committed to its implementation.

**Assistant Principal's Administration of Discipline**

Barbie believed that consistency in administration of discipline was critical. She said that consistency removes confusion among the students and make them aware of what will happen to them if they disorder school rules. Barbie believed that all students should be treated the same irrespective of their socioeconomic background.

**Assistant Principal's Administration of Suspensions**

When asked the number of students suspended in a semester, Barbie explained that the number varied from time to time but on average, about 100 students were suspended in a semester for various reasons. The criteria for suspending students varied from fighting to showing disrespect to teachers. Mrs. Barbie Mtukutu explained some alternative programs that had been introduced in which students were put into in-school suspension from Monday to Friday. However, due to lack of resources only seven students were accommodated in the program per day. Another alternative program that had been started at Pwani Junior High School was an in-school suspension program in which students went to school on Saturday and spent between three to four hours doing projects.

Mrs. Mtukutu repeated her earlier stand on suspension by saying she thought they were only helpful if the teachers and administrators succeeded in making the
Table 5.9. Summary of Similarities and Differences Between Britt and Barbie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Britt</th>
<th>Barbie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considers himself as a facilitator</td>
<td>Describes herself as a good listener who is both strict and fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in collaboration with the faculty</td>
<td>Believes in collaboration with the faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly believes in student involvement in decision making process through a strong student council</td>
<td>Believes in gaining students' support in administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is highly visible and available to both students and teachers</td>
<td>Sits in her office most of the time doing paper work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers parental involvement in school activities as a critical ingredient in addressing disciplinary challenges.</td>
<td>Considers parental involvement as critical ingredient in addressing disciplinary challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspends only when students are involved in fighting otherwise tries other alternatives to minimize disciplinary challenges</td>
<td>Believes other alternatives to suspension work best for most of the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels that teenagers need structure for without it they are bound to misbehave</td>
<td>Believes in listening to students in order to get the underlying causes to a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views suspension as helpful if it is administered correctly</td>
<td>Views suspension as not helpful to students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

student open up so that the underlying problems could be diagnosed. If the source of the problem could be found, then suspension could be said to be helpful but not otherwise. Pwani Junior High School had started a school resource police program with a police officer who worked very closely with the faculty. The program lasted for eight weeks and focused on alternatives to violence and drugs. This program has been very helpful for many students.
Summary of Assistant Principal’s Activities

Mrs. Barbie Mtukutu believed that students should be listened to and involved in formulation of the school discipline policy. Whatever happened in the community spilled over to school and the school had to be aware of the things that were happening in the community from which the students came. Barbie believed parent involvement in school activities was an effective way of addressing discipline problems in school. The differences between Britt and Barbie are presented in Table 5.9.

Cross Case Analysis Description

In this section, I examine the four principals through the use of cross-case or cross-site analysis techniques (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The analysis is based on emergent themes or patterns that are common across the four cases. The primary method of contrast which emerged from the data was a comparison of the four principals role in regard to discipline in general and suspension in particular. In addition, the principals are compared based on their personal and school characteristics which inevitably have an impact on the role they play in the administration of suspension and suspension policy in their schools.

Principal and District Suspension Policy

While principals in the four sites perceived district suspension policy as an important guideline, they all believed it should be followed with great caution. All four principals had a contingency approach to discipline, which allowed them to make decisions based on the magnitude and the situation in which particular
disciplinary incidents occurred. The principals made rules regarding particular disciplinary incidents depending on the magnitude and situation in which it occurred. This was clearly articulated by the four principals at the four sites. The principals perceived the suspension policy as a flexible but not rigid document and therefore, made modification as they saw fit. This is consistent with the notion articulated by Hoy and Miskel (1991) that leadership is situational and there is no one method that can be used to solve all problems.

Because principals interpret and modify the district suspension policy differently, there are some irregularities in the way suspensions are administered in schools. In the four schools I studied, this irregularity persisted. For instance, in Hatarini Middle school, students were not considered to be suspended if they went for behavior or group clinic. At Lafaye and Molo Middle schools, students were sent for lunch detention and reality therapy sessions as alternative approaches to suspension, while students at Pwani had to do special assignments on Saturdays as an alternative to suspension for minor offenses.

All the principals with full participation of teachers and students had developed "housekeeping" policies which were more flexible to the individual school's needs. They all stressed the need for each school to have a mandate to formulate its own discipline policy. Such a policy was perceived as relevant to the particular needs of a school and would enable them to avoid the vague and bureaucratic procedures that are prevalent in the district suspension policy.
Principal Leadership Style

Principals at the four sites had a clear vision about the school. Mr. Shujaa, Mr. Taratibu and Kiongozi clearly articulated that they had a vision for the school. Mrs. Muthoni, the principal, Hatarini Middle School did not clearly articulate her vision for the school, but she had a clear direction for the school. For instance, she wanted the students to succeed. Although the four principals had vision, they used different leadership styles. Jane appeared to be a democratic leader. Although Brown described himself as a participatory-democratic leader, there was a discrepancy between what he said and what he practiced. From my observation, there was a chain of command flowing from top to bottom which is not a trait of participatory-democratic leadership.

School-wide Disciplinary Program

Schools with low suspension rates have school-wide disciplinary programs in their schools which act like preventive mechanisms for disciplinary challenges. Three out of the four principals pointed out that they utilized school-wide discipline in their schools. The principals indicated that they set high expectations for teachers and the students and made students aware of expected behavior in school. The principal of Lafaye Middle School believed that the school had an obligation to teach students what behavior is expected at school. School-wide disciplinary programs in these schools were not only a preventive mechanism but also an awareness program through which students learned what was expected of them at school.
Three of the schools had structured environments. Britt believed teenagers needed to be in a structured environment, otherwise they would misbehave. He believed the students needed to have few choices and that administrators should establish a routine and be consistent in following it. Motto and Brown also had developed structured-school environments that left little room for students to misbehave.

In Hatarini Middle School neither the principal nor the assistant principal articulated whether there was a school-wide discipline program. Both lacked consistency in the way they administered disciplinary matters when compared with the other three schools.

**Relationship with Faculty**

The four principals had good relationships with the teachers. They all indicated that they supported teachers fully because they could not achieve much without teacher-support. Brown, who had a strong personality, admitted he directed his teachers on what to do. However, he pointed out that he supported his teachers in every way. Jane, Motto and Britt strongly expressed their support for teachers. The four principals admitted that to maintain discipline is a joint effort. Teachers play a critical role in this venture.

**Principal and Assistant Principal Relationship**

I found it intriguing when I compared the four principal’s relationship with their assistant principals. Jane Muthoni and George Zambo did not have the same philosophy. George perceived the current disciplinary problems in schools as being partly due to a larger community problem, while Jane Muthoni perceived current
problems in school from a social and human point of view. Mr. Zambo perceived
everything from a religious point of view. Interestingly enough, despite their
differences, they seemed to work in harmony toward a common goal.

Brown’s strong personality completely overshadowed Sandra. Sandra
admitted she differed with Brown on certain issues, but like a family, they worked
together for the common good of the school. She expressed appreciation that
Brown did not leave her to deal with discipline challenges only as many principals do,
but shared all the administrative work with her. This made her support Brown fully.
They were both directly involved in the administrative work. They interacted with
the students easily and consulted with each other often.

Britt, the principal of Pwani Junior High School and Barbie, his deputy, had
a common goal. When I first visited the school, Britt was out of town. During the
interview, I found Barbie to be very protective of the principal and the school. Like
Brown, Britt’s strong personality completely overshadowed Barbie. Even so, the
two have a good working relationship.

Care and Support of Students

One thing that was outstanding with the four principals was their great care and
concern for the students. These principals had sympathy for their students and
wanted the students to succeed. The principals were aware that the social dynamics
had an impact on the students from their environment and made every endeavor to
make school a better place for these students. The four principals tried to “bring the
best” out of these students by installing confidence and self-esteem. While the four
principals said they cared and had concern for the students, Motto was the most outstanding. During my observation, I noted he interacted with the students freely. There seemed to be mutual trust and confidence between Motto and the students.

**Principal’s Relationship with the Central Office**

The principals’ relationship with the central office has an impact on the way they carry out their day-to-day work. The four principals in this study made different comments regarding the central office. Principals who have good relationships with the central office get good teachers and teaching materials easily. Brown commented that he did not have any complaints regarding the district suspension policy because he was involved in its formulation. He also said the central office had promised to give him good teachers prior to his being appointed as the principal of Lafaye Middle School.

Britt worked at the central office prior to his appointment as the principal of Pwani Middle School and had maintained a good relationship. Moreover, he knew all the key people in the central office. Like Brown, Britt indicated he could get anything he wanted from the central office. Motto also had good relationship with the central office. Since his school was a magnet school and the pride of the district, Motto could get good teachers, support and instructional materials from the central office. Jane can be singled out as the only principal who did not indicate whether she had good relationship with the central office or not. However, she did not have any negative things to say about central office. The three principals were outspoken on their relationship with the central office and it is not clear whether gender came
into play here. As indicated Jane did not express her relationship with the central office. By analyzing the relationship of these principals with the central office, it can be inferred that principals in schools with low suspension rates endeavor to establish good relationships with the central office.

Parental Involvement

A common theme echoed by all principals was the importance of involving parents in school activities. Jane Muthoni and Motto lamented the lack of parental involvement in their schools. Brown and Britt commented that parents and the community at large actively participated in activities in their respective schools. These two principals attributed the low suspension rates in their schools to a combined effort between the schools and the parents.

Unique Innovation

I examined unique incidents in this study consistent with a Goetz and LeCompe (1984) recommendation. The two researchers recommend that other investigators look for unique incidents in qualitative research. Such incidents could bring new insights into the study that could be used for new innovations. When I compared the four case studies, Britt, principal of Pwani Junior High School had a unique approach to discipline in his school. Prior to his being appointed as the principal, the school had a bad image in the community due to lack of discipline. Students had a reputation of roaming the streets of the community instead of attending classes. The introduction of the demerit system and dividing students into
cadres or teams and placing them under a group of teachers is something that is unique in this study.

A second unique approach to discipline at Pwani Middle school was that all the students wore uniforms. It is not clear what impact the wearing of uniforms has on students, but from my conversation with the president of the student association, it appears that uniform give students a unique identity. This identity makes them conscience of their behavior because of the awareness that everyone can recognize who they are because of their uniform. In addition, the wearing of uniforms eliminates unnecessary class competition in fashions by treating all students the same irrespective of their background. According to the president of the student association at Pwani many quarrels that escalate into fights develop in schools where students do not wear uniforms. Further research on how the wearing of uniforms affect students' behavior is necessary.

**Summary of Cross Analysis Description**

Generally, these characteristics were common among the four principals. First, each principal perceived the district suspension policy as a guide. All the principals had a contingency approach to discipline. They made modifications to the district suspension policy as they saw fit. The principals also had school-wide discipline programs, good relationships with the central office, and a clear vision about the school.

Secondly, all the principals had good relationships with the faculty members. The principals acknowledged that they cannot maintain discipline without the
teachers' support. Each of the principals indicated that he/she fully supported the teachers in disciplinary and instructional matters. In addition, all the principals endeavored to involve parents in school activities and even in schools where this had not been fully achieved, the principals were trying hard to get parents involved.

Third, the principals in these schools had developed "structured environments" so that there was as little room for confusion as possible. They had established routines and were consistent in their school administration. The principals had set high expectations for teachers and students, and were highly visible in the school. It is most likely that these characteristics minimized disciplinary challenges and consequently, contributed to low suspension rates.

Table 5.10 summarizes the characteristics of the four principals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>Student Involvement</th>
<th>Structured Environment</th>
<th>Student Support</th>
<th>Teacher Support</th>
<th>Principal and Suspension Policy</th>
<th>Parental Involvement</th>
<th>Out-of-School Suspension</th>
<th>In-School Suspension</th>
<th>School-Wide Discipline Program</th>
<th>Relationship with Teachers</th>
<th>Caring</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Visibility</th>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Administrative Style</th>
<th>PRINCIPAL</th>
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<td>JANE BROWN MOTTO BRITT</td>
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Table 5.8: Summarizes the Characteristics of Four Principals

- ◆ - Low or Weak
- ◆ ◆ - Moderate
- ◆ ◆ ◆ - High

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CHAPTER SIX
Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

Study Overview

I designed this study to explore the role of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates. Principals have a strong influence on the character of the school, and their leadership role is an important factor in facilitating the learning process of the school (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). The principal of a school is a key person with a capacity to have positive influence (Parkay & Hall, 1992).

Several studies indicate that the principal plays a significant role in contributing to student performance, especially in more successful schools (Edmonds & Frederiksen, 1978; Vallina, 1975). Moreover, the way principals deal with discipline problems in their schools, and with suspensions in particular, may have a negative or a positive impact on the behavior of students and teachers. The Carnegie Report (1988) stated that urban schools are often characterized by discipline problems, which include drugs, violence, and vandalism.

I approached the problem in this study with a mixed methodology, using both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The quantitative methods made it possible for the data to be collected from 65 middle school principals in seven school districts. The qualitative methods confirmed the initial findings and provided in-depth detail in selected schools with low suspension rates. Both
methods supported my hypotheses. Qualitative methodology also provided descriptive information that explores the principals' perceptions in regard to suspensions. In the quantitative part of this study I had two hypotheses:

1. There is a significant difference in the perception of the use of school discipline between principals in schools with low suspension rates and their counterparts in schools with high suspension rates.

2. There is a significant difference in the perception of the principal's use of suspension between principals in schools with low suspension rates as compared to principals in schools with high suspension rates.

In the qualitative part of this study, the research questions were:

1. How do the perceptions of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates compare with the perceptions of other principals in similar schools with regard to suspensions?

2. What alternatives to suspensions do principals use in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates?

Summary of Findings

Quantitative Findings and Discussion

The quantitative results of this study, based on a survey of 65 urban middle schools principals in predominantly African-American urban schools, revealed differences in the way the principals responded to various survey items.
The principals (100%) regarded good leadership as a critical ingredient to effectively address disciplinary challenges. Smith and Andrew (1989) in their review of literature, indicate that through good leadership, administrators should use their knowledge and skills to foster conditions where all children can reach their highest potential. Quantitative data revealed that principals believed that the existing school suspension policy is inadequate and full of ambiguities, which makes implementation difficult at the school level. Principals also indicated that modification of the suspension policy was necessary. Principals further indicated that the availability of a policy manual that clearly explains offenses and appropriate disciplinary measures would be helpful.

Quantitative results also show that a majority of the principals viewed suspensions as a necessary deterrent to "student's disruptive behavior". However, they cautioned that suspension was not always the most effective way of dealing with disciplinary problems and that other approaches to suspensions, such as student detention and counseling, should be considered before suspension.

Principals perceived effective discipline as a collaborative effort, requiring the support of teachers, students and parents. In addition, principals indicated that parental participation in school activities would minimize disciplinary problems. This is consistent with the findings of Roesener (1995) who found that there are fewer disciplinary challenges in schools where parents participate in school activities than where they do not.

When t-tests were conducted no significant differences were found to support the first hypothesis. This may suggest that irrespective of whether the principals
came from schools with low or high suspension rates they perceived suspension and the need to develop preventive measures in the same way.

There was a slight difference between principals in schools with low suspension rates and those principals in schools with high suspension rates when the second hypothesis was subjected to $t$ tests. This may suggest that principals in schools with low suspension rates use different strategies than their counterparts in schools with high suspension rates.

Ancillary results which included MANOVA and ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences based on teaching experience, ethnicity, the number of years the respondents had served as principal in the same school and the school size. Four independent variables influenced the way the principals responded to the dependent variables.

Principals who had taught for 5 to 10 years responded differently from those who had taught for 20 or more years. This is not surprising because principals who serve as teachers for a long time gain experience in dealing with disciplinary matters. Principals who have served as teachers are also expected to have gained some knowledge on the school dynamics which are vital to creating a structure in school that would enhance teaching and learning. In addition, principals who have served as teachers are expected to have been exposed to the school culture which is vital in working with teachers and dealing with students.

African-American principals differed from their white counterparts in their perception on the use of preventive measures to discipline. This may imply that African-American principals use different strategies to address disciplinary challenges.
in general and suspension in particular. This is consistent with Banks and Banks (1993) who pointed out that often teachers from different cultural backgrounds misinterpret certain behavior of students who come from cultures different from their own. In addition, there was a significant difference between African-American and white principals in the way they perceived their school and the notion of control.

Principal’s ethnicity influenced the way the principals responded to five survey items. Radin (1988) pointed out that African-American students were twice as likely to be suspended from school as white students. Race seemed to be a critical issue in administering suspension. Radin found that suspensions were applied differently depending on the students’ race. In addition, the findings are consistent with Wu et al. (1982) who indicated that there was a racial imbalance in suspension in many schools.

There were significant differences between respondents who had served as principals in the same school for 5 to 10 years and those who had served for 11 or more years on six items. This implies that respondents who have served as principals in the same school for 11 years or more had gained experience with time and, therefore, perceived issues differently from respondents who had served as principals for 5 to 10 years.

Those respondents who had served as principals for many years presumably acquired administrative skills and learned to deal with disciplinary challenges better.
than the novice. Consequently, they can structure the learning environment in such a way that discipline challenges would be minimal.

Quantitative findings show that 53.7% of the principals viewed suspension as a necessary deterrent to students' disruptive behaviors. However, they also cautioned that suspension was not always the most effective way of dealing with students' disciplinary problems, and qualitative results suggest the same. Quantitative findings show that the existing suspension policy is inadequate and ambiguous, making modification or change necessary. The findings also show the need for a policy manual that clearly explains offenses and their disciplinary measures. The qualitative findings support this statement. In addition, both quantitative and qualitative findings show the importance of parental involvement in school decision making processes and activities.

The findings revealed a significant difference in the perceptions between principals in schools with low suspension and those in schools with high suspensions, $t(26)=-2.45$ $p<.05$. Findings in this study support this difference in that the four principals had different perceptions on the principal's use of suspension. These principals viewed the use of suspensions as the last resort. They preferred to use other alternatives like counseling and detention before suspending a student.

There was a significant difference between principals in schools with a student population of 200 to 600 and 600 to 800 in the way they responded to three survey items. The difference in response between the two groups of principals may be due to the diversity of the students in their schools. The bigger the school the
more disciplinary challenges. It is easier to maintain discipline in a small school than in a larger one. These findings are consistent with the Carnegie Report (1988) that indicated that many large inner-city schools have more disciplinary challenges than rural and suburban schools.

The sample used in the quantitative part of this study consisted of 65 principals from Louisiana. The purpose of quantitative study was to make generalizations to the larger population. The findings of this study can be used to make generalizations in the predominantly African-American urban middle schools in Louisiana.

**Qualitative Results.**

I selected four principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates for my case studies. I interviewed and observed each principal and assistant principal during the fall semester of 1995. I used Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence as the main technique of data analysis. The patterns that emerged across the cases were analyzed.

The mission was to examine the role of principals in predominantly African-American urban middle schools with low suspension rates. Since many predominantly African-American urban middle schools have been characterized by a lack of coherent instructional programs and regular routine (Carnegie Report, 1988) which results in disciplinary problems that include high suspension and expulsion, I examined what these four principals do differently to address disciplinary challenges in their schools.
Qualitative results show that principals in these four schools share certain qualities. Principals support teachers morally by letting them know that their decisions and judgements were respected and valued while materially principals ensure that teachers have ample school stationery and equipment for their instructional duties. Johnson and Johnson (1990) indicated that principals can be assets or liabilities to those teachers who are trying to maintain discipline. When teachers realize the principal is not supporting them, they withdraw. The findings support the work of Mertz (1978) who conducted a study on how behavior is dealt with in schools. She found out that teachers' attitudes drastically affected the way students behaved. In schools where the principal cooperated with the teachers, there were fewer disciplinary problems than in schools where there was little or no cooperation.

In this study, the four principals followed the district suspension policy but did so with a contingency approach to discipline. The principals modified rules as they saw fit depending on the circumstances. They perceived the suspension policy as a flexible guideline but not a rigid document.

Qualitative results show that the four principals had high levels of vision for their schools. Brown, Motto and Britt were outspoken regarding their vision for their respective schools. Jane did not articulate her vision for the school but had a clear direction for Hatarini Middle School. For instance, she said she wanted her students to succeed and was ready to do what it took to achieve that end. They all indicated that they set high expectations for teachers and the students. This is
consistent with the work of Lomotey (1991) who found effective African-American principals to be those who set high academic standards and expectations for their students. These principals endeavored to achieve those expectations and articulated their expectations to teachers and the students. In this study, Brown and Motto indicated that their main objective was to elevate the aspirations of their students by making them realize they are capable individuals and can achieve their highest goals.

Although the four principals had visions for their respective schools, they used different leadership styles. Jane, principal of Hatarini Middle School, appeared to be a democratic leader. Brown, Principal of Lafaye Middle School, indicated that he was a participatory democratic leader but in reality there was a discrepancy between what he said and did. From observation, the chain of command flowed from top to bottom which is not a trait of democratic leadership. Motto, principal of Molo Middle School, and Britt, principal of Pwani Middle School, used a democratic type of leadership.

A salient theme in this study was the importance of a school-wide discipline program. Three out of the four principals indicated they had school-wide disciplinary programs in their schools. The three principals indicated that the programs had been formulated with the combined input of administrators, teachers and students. School-wide disciplinary programs did not only act as preventive measures to disciplinary challenges but also provided a forum to make students aware of the kind of behavior expected at school.

The four principals in this study had a good relationship with their faculty. They all indicated that they supported their teachers. They were aware that they
could achieve nothing without their teachers' support. The principals admitted that maintaining discipline is a joint effort. They did not only support teachers on disciplinary matters but also ensured that teachers had adequate instructional materials. Inevitably, teachers are likely to do their best when they know the principal is supportive of them.

I found the principals in this study to have a good working relationship with their assistant principals. While some principals held a different philosophy from the assistant principals, they worked together for the good of the students. In addition, the four principals cared about the students. They were all concerned about the welfare of their students. This concern made students in their schools feel valued.

The qualitative results show that the principals in the four schools regarded parental involvement in school activities and in decision making as critical. In three of the four sites, parents were involved in school activities. Jane lamented the lack of parental involvement in her school as unfortunate but added she was doing the best she could to get them involved. All the principals indicated that involvement of parents in school activities is the most effective way of dealing with disciplinary challenges. This is shown by Brown's comment:

If a parent shows ownership for the building and in the success of the school, the student's problems become our problems. As the African proverb says-It takes the whole village to raise a child- the child becomes our child. This school belongs to the public and what I am trying to do is not only to involve the parents in school activities but the entire community—the local businessmen, industries, and so on—

These findings are consistent with studies of suspension in Cleveland (Stevens, 1993) in which it was found that schools with low suspension rates had a
high level of parent and community involvement. In schools that had high suspension rates, suspensions were used as a means of bringing parents into the school, and administrators concentrated primarily on standards and on control rather than on instructional matters.

Lastly, while the four principals had certain common strategies that they used in their schools to deal with disciplinary challenges, I found some irregularities in the way suspension cases were reported to the central office. For instance, in Hatarini School students were sometimes sent to a behavioral center for three days which is outside school premises but is never reported in the central office as suspension. It seemed that there was lack of uniformity in defining suspensions and administration of suspension was arbitrary.

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative results, as well as providing clarification and details (Patton, 1990). The qualitative results showed that all of the principals, irrespective of the suspension level in their school, regarded good leadership as a critical ingredient to effectively address disciplinary challenges. This shows the importance of leadership in dealing with school discipline because principal leadership strongly influences the level of discipline in a schools.

Qualitative findings of this study show that principals in the four schools were supportive of students. They endeavored to create an environment conducive to learning and an orderly atmosphere where harmony and curiosity is likely to be nurtured. The principals and teachers interacted with the students in various
activities. The principals' presence symbolized that they valued what the students were doing and were concerned for their welfare. Manasse (1985) indicated that effective principals understand the importance of symbolic leadership, and are aware of the organizational and institutional settings in which they operate.

Principals were visible in their school. Manasse (1985) indicated that principals' symbolic behavior, like walking in the hallways, signals the students who would otherwise misbehave that they are being monitored. The awareness that the principal is standing in the hallway acts as a control mechanism to discipline challenges.

Three out of four of the principals had structured school environments. Britt, the principal of Pwani Junior High School, in particular believed that students in junior high school need a structured atmosphere to limit their behavior. Brown and Motto also believed that teenage students need proper guidance and structure. The three principals also felt that while students need to be in a highly structured atmosphere, their extra energy should be geared toward constructive ends by involving them in the decision making process and in school activities. This was evident at Pwani and Ziwani schools where students were playing basketball during the lunch recess. Principals in these schools had set up a way of occupying students in constructive activities where fights and unnecessary quarrels were limited. The principals and the teachers on duty were always present during recess and lunch break. This brought orderliness and structure in the school. Observational data revealed that Jane, the principal at Hatarini Middle School, did not have as good a
structure as the other three principals. As a result there appeared to have been more
discipline challenges than in the other three schools. This was ironical since
according to the central office records, Hatarini is among the schools with low
suspension rates. This suggests that there are some irregularities in the way
suspensions are reported.

In addition to confirming the quantitative research findings, the qualitative
research also provides additional insight into student suspension. In the quantitative
part of this study, a difference was found between the two groups in the way
principals perceived the use of suspension. However, details of these differences
were clearly identified through the use of qualitative methods. Moreover, the
qualitative findings revealed irregularities that exist in reporting suspension to the
central office.

Discussion

In this chapter both the quantitative and the qualitative findings are restated.
The use of multiple-data-collection methods and triangulation has contributed to the
trustworthiness of the data. The findings of this study show that principal leadership
is critical to effectively addressing discipline challenges which is consistent with the
findings reported in the literature. The findings also highlight the inadequacy of the
existing suspension policy which is ambiguous and calls for a policy manual that
would clearly explain the offenses that warrant suspension.

The findings of this study also show that while principals indicate that
suspension was necessary as a deterrent to those students who would otherwise
misbehave, they acknowledged suspension was not the best and most effective way of dealing with disciplinary challenges. Lastly, the findings of this study show the importance of involving parents in school activities. Discipline is a joint venture between parents and the school. The principal alone cannot foster it without the support of the parent.

All the principals in this study use other alternatives to suspensions to deal with disciplinary challenges. These approaches range from reality therapy to behavior clinics. Review of the literature indicates that suspension may be detrimental to students and does not appear to minimize the prevailing disciplinary challenges (Uchitelle, Bartz, and Hillman, 1989). Other approaches to disciplinary problems can be used. Counseling appears to be promising, but there is no one particular method that can be used to address all disciplinary challenges. This is because there are many variables that contribute to students' disruptive behavior.

Implications for Theory

Curiosity quests of investigators to how and why certain phenomenon in a social setting occur are met through theory testing. The findings of this study provide such a quest for theory testing as researchers endeavor to ask how principals in schools with low suspension rates administer discipline or why do some predominately African-American urban middle schools have low suspension rates? They would endeavor to find out what principals in schools with low suspension rates do differently from those principals in urban middle schools with high suspension rates.
Implications for Practitioners

The findings of this study offer several implications for practitioners. The results of this study provide a deeper understanding to practitioners on the strategies principals in schools with low suspensions use to address disciplinary challenges. In addition, the findings expose the discrepancy between the written district suspension policy (theoretical) and how it is interpreted and practiced. The findings seem to indicate that principals’ ethnicity is a determining factor in the way they interpret what is an acceptable or unacceptable behavior in the school setting. Principals seem to use different strategies to address discipline challenges. Since schools in the U.S are multicultural, administrators and teachers need to be well informed on the cultural perspectives of students who belong to a culture that is different from their own.

The findings seem to indicate that principals in schools with low suspensions care and have concern for the students. These findings are consistent with the work of Lomotey (1991) who found effective African-American principals to have concern for their students. This implies that practitioners should endeavor to understand the school and family dynamics and how they affect students’ learning.

Lastly, the findings for this study can be used as a reflection on the effectiveness of suspension by policymakers. The four principals in this study voiced their concern on the inadequacy of the district suspension policy. The four principals perceived suspension policy as a guide and preferred to modify it as they considered fit. This implies the principals value autonomy and should be empowered
to make some rules and regulations at the school level. This finding is consistent with the literature on school restructuring with emphasis on the importance of empowerment of principals, teachers and parents so that they can make decisions at the school level (Murphy, 1991).

**Implications for Future Research**

Further research on the perceptions of principals of district suspension policy is needed. Findings of this study indicate that we know little about how closely principals follow their district’s policies on suspensions. For instance, the district’s suspension policy is subject to principals’ interpretation. Further research on how to bridge the gap between central office’s intentions and principal’s behavior is needed. Practitioners should have more input into decision-making processes that pertain to policies regarding discipline.

While the qualitative findings of this study may not be used for generalization due to the small sample size and the geographical limitation from which the sample was collected, the findings provide a foundation from which further quantitative research could be based. Such investigation could not only have a large sample composition but also could cover a wider geographical area. Since the findings indicate that teaching experience, ethnicity and years served as principal in the same school are significant factors in determining how principals perceive suspensions, further quantitative research focusing on how these variables affect principals’ perspectives would be ideal. Findings of this study also provide testable ideas for future studies and policymakers. In addition, the findings of this study show the
inadequacy in the existing suspension policy, ambiguities and lack of consistency in administration of suspension.
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Rist, R. C. (1982). On the application of ethnographic inquiry in education:


APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES

**Directions**
Please indicate your opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of each statement.

**Key:**
- 4 = Strongly Agree
- 3 = Agree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

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<td>1. Good leadership can best address disciplinary challenges before they occur.</td>
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<td>2. In order for learning to take place, disciplinary challenges should be minimized as much as possible.</td>
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<td>3. Suspensions are helpful to students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Every school should have a written suspension policy.</td>
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<td>5. Suspension policies should be modified to fit the particular needs of individual schools.</td>
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<td>6. A policy manual that clearly explains the offenses would be helpful.</td>
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<td>7. The use of suspensions can easily lead to litigation.</td>
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<td>8. Existing policies are full of bureaucratic procedures that make implementation difficult.</td>
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<td>9. Suspension is influenced by a students' race.</td>
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10. Suspensions may be influenced by student's background.  
11. Students who are suspended many times develop a dislike for school.  
12. Suspension is the best and most effective response to disciplinary challenges.  
13. Suspensions are necessary because they serve as a warning to other students who might otherwise misbehave.  
14. Involving administrators, teachers, parents and students in the formulation of suspension policies would provide effective guidance in implementation.  
15. Principals find it difficult to implement suspension policies because students have "due process" rights.  
16. Suspension policies that currently exist in your school should be changed.  
17. Alternative learning centers are viable options to suspensions.  
18. Student governments are a good "safety valve" but should not have much influence on school suspension policy.  
19. Each school should be given the opportunity to develop its own suspension policies in addition to following those from the state or district.  
20. The existing suspension policies do not address the real causes of disciplinary challenges and are therefore ineffective.  
21. The principal should develop disciplinary measures.  
22. Principal availability in the school can minimize the occurrence of discipline challenges.
23. Principal and teacher support of students' concerns can minimize students' suspensions.

24. Use of suspension decreases disciplinary challenges in schools.

25. Involving teachers and students in formulating school rules decreases suspensions in schools.

26. Suspensions of male students are generally longer than female suspensions.

27. Suspension does more harm to students than good.

28. Suspensions should be used with caution since they can be a reinforcement to students who do not want to be in school.

29. A student who destroys school property should be suspended.

30. There are racial differences in the way suspensions are administered.

31. The principal alone should decide which student should be suspended.

32. Making contracts with students works better than suspensions.

33. In-school suspension is helpful since it does not completely remove a student from the school environment.
Demographic Information

Please check the appropriate response for each item.

1. Sex
   Male-------
   Female------

2. Teaching experience
   1 - 4-----
   5 - 10-----
   11 - 19-----
   20 or above -----

3. Years as a principal in the present school
   1 - 4-----
   5 - 10-----
   11 - 19-----
   20 or above-----

4. Years as a principal
   1 - 4-----
   4 - 10-----
   11 - 19-----
   20 or above
5. Number of years as an assistant principal
   1 - 4------
   5 - 10-----
   11 - 19-----
   20 or above

6. Ethnicity
   White------
   African-American----

7. Degrees conferred
   BS------
   MA------
   SPECIALIST------
   Ph. D/Ed.D-------

8. Student population in the school
   200 or less------
   200 - 400------
   400 - 600------
   600 - 800------
   800 and above-----
Dear Mr./Mrs.-----------------

I am conducting research to investigate the school principal's perceptions on suspensions policy and the use of suspensions as a disciplinary measure. I am requesting that you participate in this study by responding to the enclosed questionnaire. Your responses will be utilized in a general analysis of alternative methods to suspension that principals can use to address discipline challenges in Louisiana Schools.

Your name was randomly drawn from a list of all principals in the State of Louisiana. In order that the results accurately represent all principals in the identified schools, it is important that each question be completed and returned. Your participation is critical to the success of the study and it should take approximately ten minutes to respond. Please mail the completed questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelop by September 30, 1995.

The data will be entered into a database and your school will be given a code. The questionnaires will be destroyed to ensure anonymity. All responses will be held in strict confidence, and a summary report of data analysis will be ready by April 1996. If you would like to have a copy of the results, please check the appropriate space at the end of the survey.

If you have questions or want more information on this study please contact Gathogo Mukuria (Tel: 504-343-1796 or 504 388-6900) or Dr. Kofi Lomotey, (Tel: 504-388-6900).

Thank you very much for your contribution to this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Gathogo Mukuria

Graduate Student
APPENDIX C: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

Time Interview Begins: ___

The following questions will be asked to the principals. As each interview develops, additional questions may be asked, but at a minimum, these listed questions will be asked.

General

1. Tell me how you got into education.
2. How many years did you teach before you became an administrator?
3. Tell me how you got into administration.
4. Describe yourself as an administrator.
5. Tell me some of the challenges you face as an administrator.

Principal and Discipline

1. What strategies do you use to address disciplinary challenges in your school?
2. In your opinion, what contributes to students' disruptive behavior?
3. Tell me what are some of the concerns you have on discipline in your school.
4. What is your personal belief on suspensions?
5. How do you deal with the most undisciplined student in your school?
6. Parent involvement in school activities minimizes discipline problems. What is your opinion?
7. Does your school have a school-wide discipline policy? If so, how was it formulated? If not, do you consider it necessary?
8. Tell me how you support your teachers on discipline matters.

Principal and Suspension Policy

1. Tell me about suspension policy in your school.
2. Tell me what you like about your suspension policy.
3. What do you not like about the existing policy in your school?
4. Describe the part(s) of the suspension policy that you would like modified or changed.
5. How are the number of suspensions in your school affected by district policy on suspension?
6. What do you think can make your school suspension policy more effective?

7. Which works best for most students-in-school or out-of-school suspensions?

8. What do you consider to be the greatest setback for implementing the existing state and district policy at the school level?

9. What do you think would be the best way of formulating a suspension policy that can be effective at the school level?

**Principal use of Suspension**

1. How many students are suspended in a semester in your school?
2. Please describe the criteria used to determine when a student should be suspended in your school.
3. What is your opinion on suspension?
4. When is in-school suspension administered in your school?
5. Does in-school suspension have any advantage or disadvantage over out of school suspension? Please explain.
6. Explain other alternatives to suspension that you use in your school to address disciplinary problems.

I greatly appreciate the time and effort which you have devoted to participating in this interview.

Thank you very much.

Time Interview Ended....
VITA

Gathogo was born in Naivasha, Kenya. Upon graduation from Naivasha Secondary School, he attended Egogi Teachers College for a two year teaching course after which he was posted to teach in Nakuru district. He had an outstanding teaching career. After teaching for seven years in elementary schools, he decided to venture into the more challenging area of Special Education. He attended Kamwenja Teachers College in Kenya for a two year in-service course in Special Education. Upon graduation, he was posted at Ngala School for the Deaf in Nakuru Municipality. While teaching at Ngala school, he decided to come to the United States for further studies. He was admitted to Mississippi University where he received his bachelor of education degree with a concentration in Special Education in December 1988. He joined the University of Utah and graduated with master of education degree in December 1989. In June 1992 he earned another master's degree in elementary education from the State University of New York at Buffalo. In the fall of 1992 he was admitted to Louisiana State University for a Ph.D. program in Education Administration and Supervision. He has been married to Nduta since 1980 and has a son, Mukuria.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Gathogo Wa Mukuria

Major Field: Education Administration and Supervision

Title of Dissertation: The Role of Principals in Predominantly African-American Urban Middle Schools with Low Suspension Rates

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination: June 6, 1996

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