Public School Teachers and Responsible Advocacy: What Are the Perceived Limits?

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Jack J. Valenti

School of Communication

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Ronnetta E. Sims

December 2010

Public School Teachers and Responsible Advocacy:
What Are the Perceived Limits?

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Jack J. Valenti

School of Communication

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Ronnetta E. Sims

December 2010

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focused on the attitudes of a sample of 60 teachers in two Houston Independent School District schools toward applying public relations strategies, particularly responsible advocacy and advocacy-like techniques, to help reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students. It also focused on ethical implications of any attempt by teachers to mobilize public opinion to demand change and on the perceived ethical problems in failing to address the achievement gap. A six-page, 14-part survey instrument was used to measure attitudes.

Results show that large majorities of teachers endorsed the use of responsible advocacy and advocacy-like techniques and that many actually said they have engaged in responsible advocacy in behalf of public school education. Results suggest (a) a need for a process to address the achievement gap, (b) a high demand for more professional development opportunities for teachers, and (c) a need to promote understanding of the values—such as justice, critique, and care—that might guide an individual's ethical practice in schools. Scholars and practitioners can further explore the link between public relations, education, and responsible advocacy with social justice being the common denominator. The author recommends large-scale quantitative studies grounded in this research, which helped map the theoretical ground that should be explored.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis has been an extensive, challenging, and rewarding process. I must convey my sincere appreciation to several individuals for their support and patience.

Thank you to my thesis committee members – Dr. Michael Ryan, Dr. Jennifer Vardeman, and Ms. Dontee Lewis – for all your patience, support, and assistance. Each one of you has contributed extensively in making this project an academically inspiring endeavor for me. Thank you, Dr. Ryan, for being a great thesis chairman. I must express my thanks and admiration for your patience, thoroughness, and knowledge. Dr. Vardeman, thank you for your knowledge and understanding about public relations. Ms. Lewis, thank you for taking an interest in this project as the outside committee member and sharing your knowledge from a school administrator's perspective.

Special thanks to the staff of Garden Villas Elementary and Albert Thomas Middle School who participated in making my thesis research possible. I appreciate your time, patience, and endurance during this process.

Most notably, I have to thank my family for their constant support and encouragement. I would like to thank my parents for always telling me that I can do anything that I put my mind to. Thank you, Momma, for your words of wisdom. Thank you, Daddy, for always encouraging me to push and press toward the finish line when things seemed impossible. I really appreciate it! I would not have been able to go through graduate school without your love and support. I love you all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Public Relations Strategies, Ethics, and the Achievement Gap..... 1

Chapter Two: The Black-White Achievement Gap……3

Ethics, Public Relations, and Education

Risk Management and Assessment

Theory of Responsible Advocacy

No Child Left Behind

Superintendents and the Achievement Gap

Ethics and Education

Research Objective

Research Questions

Chapter Three: Methodology 27

Non-Random Sample of Teachers

Survey Instrument

Perceptions of My School

Chapter Four: Results 32

Perceptions of Responsible Advocacy

Perceptions of "My" School, Teachers, and Students

Perceived Need for Professional Development

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion 41

Conclusion

Limitations

Project Significance

Appendix A: Survey Instrument 47

List of Figures

Figure 1: Information of Sample Teachers

Figure 2: Do Teachers Engage in Responsible Advocacy?

Figure 3: Moral Leadership & Ethic of Community

Figure 4: Effective Moral Leadership Practice Consist of ...

Figure 5: Perceptions of Colleagues' Teaching Approaches

Figure 6: Current Level of Student Achievement

Figure 7: Teachers' Expectations for Students

References 53

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF FIGURES..... vi

Figure 1 29

Figure 2 33

Figure 3 34

Figure 4 35

Figure 5 37

Figure 6 38

Figure 7 39

Chapter One: Public Relations Strategies, Ethics, and the Achievement Gap

In this exploratory study, I pulled together several disparate approaches to public opinion, ethics, and public school education—responsible advocacy, risk management, the ethic of community and leadership, and the achievement gap between white and black students. Prior work in various areas described thus far suggests that effective risk management requires a solid ethics foundation and a solid ethics foundation requires effective risk management.

Do educators perceive that they, as responsible advocates, should exemplify these two qualities in their attempts to help mobilize public opinion to close the achievement gap? If the answer were yes, this would seem to imply that (a) for a school to manage its risks well, everyone who represents that school must practice good ethics, and (b) for a school to act ethically, everyone who represents that school must manage risk well. This collaborative system of risk management and ethics is a key factor in this study of teachers accepting the role of responsible advocate.

One may assume, and the literatures suggests, that as responsible advocates, educators should acknowledge the existence of the achievement gap as a critical problem and accept individual and collective responsibility for addressing the problem of eliminating, or at least significantly reducing, the gap. This means teachers need to take three vital steps as they acknowledge and accept responsibility for addressing long-standing educational inequities.

First, in accepting partial responsibility for the existence of the achievement gap, teachers must engage in critical investigation of the origin of the problem and its causes, some of which are described in this chapter. Second, teachers must accept responsibility

for closing the achievement gap by creating action-strategies that eliminate unethical schooling practices and that help sustain district-wide improvement of instruction.

Third, teachers must accept responsibility for closing the achievement gap through modeling a consistent sense of urgency toward the issue. As an essential part of their job, teachers regularly communicate with parents, community members, policymakers, and, of course, students. Teachers have a unique opportunity to help create a firm message of urgency regarding the challenge of closing the achievement gap. For example, if schools are to have any chance of reducing or eliminating the achievement gap, educators must stop writing off a percentage of strong and weak students. Instead, they must make the ethical decision to accept responsibility for educating every child on their roster and in our schools.

A combination of responsible advocacy, risk management, and sound ethics promotes respect for others, whether students, parents, community members, or simply fellow co-workers. They all share the same right to be safe, successful, and productive. Respect for others, whomever they may be, link responsible advocacy, risk management, and ethics.

Chapter 2: The Black-White Achievement Gap

Based on results released by the US Department of Education, the achievement gap between black and white students, which had decreased in the 1980s, had increased from 1990 to 1999 (Zernike, 2000). This same report stated that the average, black 17-year-old reads only as well as the average, white 13-year-old. The gap exists before kindergarten and continues through adulthood. While blacks are playing catch up with the basics, white students are soaring past them. Much of their achievement can be credited to higher expectations and more advanced work assignments. White students are more likely to be promoted to honors and gifted and talented classes, while black students are placed in special education or behavior classes, or they are simply suspended (Lipman, 1998; Zernike, 2000).

The achievement gap reflects a continuing pattern of difference in success rates between white and minority students; the gap is reflected in test scores, retention rates, dropout rates, and college readiness. This inconsistency in human achievement associated with race has been investigated thoroughly over the years and shows little change.

According to Sherman and Grogan (2003), the test score gap exists between black and white children in spite of similar schooling, wealth, and income. Teachers in schools with a majority of African-American students usually report lower standardized test scores than teachers in schools with a majority of white students. Sherman and Grogan (2003) explain that most teachers tend to have lower expectations of black students and black students respond to peer pressure, both of which cause them not to raise their own expectations. Skrla et al. (2000) argues that, “What is needed are entire school districts in

which all schools, not just isolated campuses, are places in which children of color and children from low SES homes experience the same kind of school success that most white children and children from middle-and-upper class homes always enjoyed" (p. 1).

Litigation plays a part in stimulating efforts to reduce and eliminate the gap. School finance litigation offers the most widely used legal approach to ensure fairer results for children. Indeed, claims related to the adequacy of educational resources have taken priority over other legal claims (Roellke, Green, & Zielewski, 2004). William Glenn (2006) argues that adequacy litigation that results in increased funding provides an opportunity for reducing the achievement gap, but it would be more valuable if monetary remedies were combined with non-monetary remedies, such as integrating public schools.

For over a half-century, advocates have used litigation as a key tactic in their efforts to advance educational outcomes for children who live in poverty, who are members of racial minorities, or who are otherwise disadvantaged. Desegregation cases and school finance litigation have been the main reasons for battles during this period (Baker & Green, 2005). Desegregation initially offered the most accepted tool for reform, but school litigation now serves as the central point of legal efforts (Ryan, 1999a).

Adequacy litigation attempts to narrow the black-white achievement gap by improving the relationship between school finance and African-American student proficiency, as measured by National Assessment of Educational Progress scores.

The well-known *Brown v. Board of Education* cases (O. Brown I, 1954; O. Brown II, 1955) relied on desegregation as the primary method to eliminate educational unfairness. The court in O. Brown I (1954) stated that racially segregated schools caused

black children to obtain lower quality educations than white children. As a result, the court mandated desegregation, in which black and white students were placed in the same classes (Ryan, 1999a). At this time, it was assumed that, based on desegregation, whites would always send their children to and provide support for public schools. This was not the case, as closing public schools in some areas was the way to avoid implementing desegregation (Ecks, 2004; *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, 1964).

Twenty years after Brown I, the U.S. Supreme Court narrowed the idea of desegregation in it's *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) ruling. Milliken I limited interdistrict remedies, (busing, for instance), a limitation that made relief tremendously difficult to achieve (Bell, 2004; Ecks, 2004; Ryan, 1999a). The ruling significantly reduced the impact of Brown I because residential segregation made true desegregation impossible without involving both urban and suburban schools (Ecks, 2004). Milliken I altered the objective in desegregation cases from getting diverse groups of children into the same classrooms to gaining additional funding for school districts to give back to those who were affected by segregation.

Several school finance cases arose in the decade following the Brown cases. Lawyers challenged unequal school finance because of the slow execution of the desegregation orders and they addressed openly one of the core reasons for educational inequalities: resource inequalities among different schools (Kahlenburg, 2001-2002; Ryan, 1999a). Advocates assumed that the resource disparities were related to gaps in achievement. Therefore, they hoped that making resource sharing more impartial would narrow the achievement gap. Given the correlation between race and wealth, efforts to

correct resource discrepancy could conceivably help narrow the black-white achievement gap.

The early school finance cases mainly focused on the equity of resource distribution. Lawyers wanted to break the connection between property wealth and school funding (Roellke et al., 2004). The objective of school finance cases began shifting around 1989 to focus on adequacy, which means giving schools the resources needed to educate each student to an objective standard (Roellke et al., 2004; Verstegen, 1998).

Ryan (1999a), who noted a similarity between the evolution of desegregation and finance cases, argued that desegregation originally sought to meet the needs of black and white students by placing them in the same classrooms. Adequacy litigation also can present an opportunity for every student to achieve because students are compared to an objective standard rather than to one another.

The emphasis of school finance litigation on resources limits how adequacy cases can be expected to produce change. Glenn (2006) states that adequacy can be expected to affect achievement gaps that relate in some way to resource disparities. As a consequence, adequacy litigation can be expected to affect results related to race and income, but not results related to the gender gaps in math and reading.

Ethics, Public Relations, and Education

Considerable research has documented the substantial gap between educational achievement of white students and minority students in the public schools of America, Texas, and Houston. Several public relations practitioners and academics have proposed that teachers might be mobilized to help draw attention to this gap and to help eliminate it. This study explores the attitudes of a sample of Houston teachers about (a) the gap

between black and white achievement test scores, (b) how teachers should respond (or not respond) to the problem, and (c) how teachers view responsible advocacy and their potential roles as responsible advocates. These issues will be explored through an ethics lens.

This chapter focuses on public relations processes and strategies that can be helpful in mobilizing teachers. Risk management, which has a long history in public relations theory, is described first. In this thesis, the idea of risk is applied in two ways: (a) students who score poorly on standardized tests are said to be "at risk," and (b) these "at risk" students pose a risk to school districts in terms of funding and parental support. A theory of responsible advocacy, which appears more recently in the literature of public relations, is described next.

Risk Management and Assessment

The history of risk management and assessment can be traced to the early Greeks and Romans (Covello & Mumpower, 1985). History is filled with examples of people evaluating, communicating about, and innovatively avoiding or adjusting to risks (Plough & Krimsky, 1987). To cite a contemporary example, many American high schools have responded to at-risk students who have low achievement scores by extending the time for learning (Pennington, 2006). They raised standards and expectations, particularly for students in low-performing schools who are unlikely to reach higher standards without more time and support. These schools identified the risk (low achievement scores), evaluated alternatives, and then implemented a solution.

Strategic and ethical approaches to risk communication have changed drastically during the past thirty years. The National Research Council has defined risk communication as:

> An interactive process of exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, and institutions. It involves multiple messages about the nature of risk as well as other messages, not strictly about risk, that express concerns, opinions, or reactions to risk messages or to legal and institutional arrangements for risk communication. (p. 21)

Vincent T. Covello, a risk communication scholar, defined risk communication as "the exchange of information among interested parties about the nature, magnitude, significance, or control of a risk," which is consistent with the definition from the National Research Council. Both emphasize the transmission of information and do not specify an outcome (Covello, 1992, p. 359).

William Leiss identified three stages of development in the study of risk communication. The first phase began in the mid-1970s, when some scholars and practitioners suggested that risk estimates should be expressed quantitatively and that "priorities of regulatory actions and public concerns should be established as the basis of comparative risk estimates" (Leiss, 2002, p. 87). Many scholars dispute both the ethical and strategic success of the approach because, for a variety of reasons, information about risk is not effectively communicated exclusively through the use of quantitative risk estimates. One reason is the public's skepticism about technical specialists. Another is the difficulty of quantifying some kinds of risk.

The second phase started around 1985 with the understanding that risk messages should be designed to be influential, to alter people's inferences about risk and to increase their support of the industry creating a risk (Leiss, 2002). Research during this phase was valuable to the development of risk communication theory because it took into account people's perceptions about risks, and established a basis for the concept of community dialogue among stakeholders. Researchers also focused on enhancing trust by improving source credibility.

The third phase of risk communication began around the mid-1990s. Practitioners acknowledged that risk communication should not focus only on persuasive techniques because that approach can create a lack of trust, vagueness, and lack of control in risk communication. The current model includes the element of responsible advocacy through strategic risk communication; it places importance on the social interrelations among stakeholders in the dialogue and on the resulting actions within risk management (Palancher & Heath, 2006).

From a risk communication perspective, society may regulate the behavior of an organization or industry to prevent wrong to others, particularly when the behavior is considered dishonest or detrimental to society.

Because some organizations and industries have wronged others, numerous public relations professionals and scholars have incorporated ethics theory into their practice and research. Scholars such as Kathy Fitzpatrick and Candace Gauthier endorsed the application and study of ethics analysis techniques in several areas, ranging from attorney-adversary to the two-way symmetrical model, which focus on practitioners' dual

obligations to serve client organizations and the public interest (Fitzpatrick & Gauther, 2001).

James Grunig and Jon White are credited for developing the two-way symmetrical model, which holds that "public relations should be based on a worldview that incorporates ethics into the process of public relations" (Grunig & White, 1992, p. 57). Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) summarized the relationship of public relations and social responsibility by saying, "public relations managers should be 'inside the door' of management in all kinds of organizations where they can provide internal social reports on the organization's public performance" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 59).

The two-way symmetrical modal is essential in my study of school districts responding to achievement gaps by race. The ethical dilemmas arise when people struggle to manage the risk, seek and responsibly challenge facts, evaluate premises, and form conclusions derived from those facts and premises. Responsible advocacy occurs when teachers and others make an ethics-based case that reflects the arguments and claims of concerned citizens, parents, and students.

Theory of Responsible Advocacy

The theory of responsible advocacy, which grew out of the two-way symmetrical model, was developed by Fitzpatrick and Gauthier as a significant step toward "providing a universally acceptable philosophy on which standards of ethical public relations practice might be based" (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001, p. 201). Responsible advocacy seeks to marry the ethical identities of the public relations professional as advocate and social conscience, two roles that have consistently been at odds. A teacher, in his or her role as a public relations person, also is an advocate who is accountable to his or her

student or school. As a social conscience, however, a teacher is accountable to the community at large. Public relations scholar Don Wright writes, "They [public relations professionals] need guidance in reconciling the…roles of the professional advocate and the social conscience" (qtd. Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001, p. 201). The theory of responsible advocacy attempts to supply that guidance.

Professionals must adhere to three principles. First, a public relations professional must carefully consider the harms and benefits of possible action. Second, respect for all persons must be assured. Third, a public relations professional must see that all rewards and difficulties are equally allocated. These principles are components of the responsible advocacy theory. The principles can conflict and therefore responsible advocacy must be determined according to the personal ethics of a practitioner. Overall, the Fitzpatrick and Gauthier theory suggests that public relations practitioners can serve the interests of clients while simultaneously and equally serving the interests of society at large.

The advantages and disadvantages of the theory must be considered in any detailed analysis of responsible advocacy. The greatest advantage of the model is its dedication to both advocacy and social responsibility. By giving equal weight to both roles, ethics becomes a realistic component in the practice of public relations. In other words, it is unrealistic to think that ethics can exist within the public relations industry if a practitioner serves only the interests of either a client or the public. Furthermore, in today's world, people in and out of the public relations industry recognize the need for social responsibility within corporate America. Paul Samuelson writes, "A larger corporation these days not only may engage in social responsibility, it had damn well

better try to do so" (qtd. in Stone, 2005, p. 31). Simply put, a theory of ethics that does not seriously consider the role of social conscience will not be particularly useful.

Another advantage of the Fitzpatrick and Gauthier model lies in the principles on which it is founded. The three principles provide easily understandable moral guideposts for the public relations practitioner.

The greatest disadvantage to the theory is the likelihood that the principles will conflict. Consequently, another disadvantage is the use of *personal* ethics to take the place of the principles when they conflict. Each person is unique, and so are his or her personal ethics. Thus, an accurate balance of both advocate and social conscience cannot be ensured. The Fitzpatrick/Gauthier theory provides the most universally applicable view of responsible advocacy.

No Child Left Behind

School districts across the nation are declaring that their goal is to "Leave No Child Behind." The consistent failure of schools to provide equality of opportunity for all students is having a tremendous impact on the African-American community and the nation (NAACP Call for Action in Education, retrieved April 20, 2008).

More than eight years after the election of George W. Bush, the main force behind No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the nation is still analyzing the effects of this federal legislation. Some educators charge that the plan is flawed, developmentally inappropriate, inadequately funded, and leaving increasing numbers of students, teachers, and schools behind.

Former President Bush claimed that he would develop the most influential education plan in the nation's history. He guaranteed every child in America would read

on grade level and compute high-level mathematical problems. Every teacher would be highly qualified and schools would measure yearly progress (AYP) to prove these outcomes were achieved. This was the foundation of President Bush's No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind, 2005) educational plan.

Educational outcomes currently are defined mainly as the percentages of students passing standardized tests. This is definitely a function of No Child Left Behind and its inexorable push toward AYP (adequate yearly progress) to reach 100% proficiency by 2014.

Since World War I and the creation of the U.S. Army Alpha assessment test (Wineburg 2004), many educators have used standardized testing instruments to assess student performance in K-12 public schools. The Army Alpha allowed military officials to test recruits based on intellect, ability, and potential. Educators discovered the method of evaluation and adapted the format to measure educational goals.

Standardized testing had become by 2005 the main vehicle for measuring student and teacher performance. States across the nation are using the results of these tests to determine student promotion and placement, graduation qualifications, teacher salary and employment, school accreditation, and district funding. U.S. governors made grand assumptions about why schools needed higher and tougher standards and about how to measure performance. Ramirez (1999) noted some of those assumptions:

> Students are unmotivated and need more immediate consequences tied to their learning; teachers are inadequately skilled; local communities, school board members, and superintendents do not know what their students should be learning

and therefore testing accountability through [standardized] testing will pressure the system to improve. (p. 205)

The exams the politicians mandate and state departments of education create to measure student performance are typically designed as criterion-referenced tests. Criterion-referenced tests do not indicate how students are performing against each other; they are concerned with a student's competence level. The problem with criterion-related exams is that the stakes to do well have been raised so high that validity issues are compromised because teachers are beginning to teach to the tests rather than to learning objectives (Popham 2005).

Critics charge that teaching to the test is eliminating the opportunity for teachers to teach students higher order thinking skills (Darling-Hammond, 2004). However, teachers' jobs are at stake, student promotion is in jeopardy, and graduation opportunity rides on the scores of these tests. Many teachers think they are doing students and themselves a favor by teaching to the test. The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (2007) contends that many of the best teachers transfer from low performing schools to higher performing schools to protect their jobs, leaving behind students of lower socioeconomic status.

Many researchers acknowledged that standardized testing is problematic in that test makers have assumptions and conceptions based on socioeconomic status and race. Freeman (2005) argues that a "colorblind racism" results under the NCLB mandate, which disregards the realities of racial disparities. Jimerson (2005) observes that rural schools are penalized by NCLB's school choice plan because traveling from a failing school in a rural area to a top-rated school could take up to four hours; in the state of

Hawaii, it could necessitate a planned trip. Beers (2005) describes a rational perspective when she writes:

> Our children of poverty are most likely to attend schools that are best described as lacking: lacking equipment; lacking cleanliness; lacking textbooks; lacking computers and Internet access; lacking parental involvement; lacking extracurricular activities; lacking fine arts and technology electives; lacking high student achievement; and lacking enough highly qualified teachers. (p. 5)

Kohn and Henkin (2002) argue that when test stakes rise; people seek help from costly professional sources. Wealthy families, schools, and districts can afford this help. Lower performing schools on average cannot afford to offer high priced materials for these high stakes tests. NCLB is leaving minority and economically challenged students behind.

Columbia University doctoral candidate Jennifer Booher-Jennings describes a Texas "trick" that penalizes lower performing schools (Booher-Jennings, 2005). Booher-Jennings describes a process of "educational triage," which decides who will get extra resources and who won't. Those students who are labeled as remedial or who are in special education get nothing extra; nor do those who are at mastery level. All of the attention and resources go to the "bubble kids." Bubble kids are those who will pass with a little extra help. One of the teachers surveyed by Booher-Jennings explained:

> If you have a kid who is getting a 22, even if they improve to a 40, they won't be close. However, if you have a child with a 60, well, they're in the shooting range of passing with a 70. Bush says that no child should be left behind, but the reality in American public schools is that some kids are always going to be left behind,

especially in Texas school districts, when we have an emphasis on the bubble kids. (p. 242)

Superintendents and the Achievement Gap

Although it may be impossible for a superintendent to reform an entire school system to bring more fairness for all children, he or she can encourage student success for all. Administrators must provide the vision of change that nurtures students of all races and socioeconomic levels. Kowalski (1999) notes that, "Superintendents must be the primary catalyst for change" (p. 50) and Vicki Phillips (2000) argues, "The superintendent's job is to understand deeply the components of standards based reform, and to be able to apply the lessons that have been learned elsewhere to the implementation of reform in the district" (p. 46).

However, First (2001) argues that a superintendent needs realistic expectations to "transform the school district into a place where decisions are made to treat all children well" (p. 252). To produce change, present-day superintendents must use political insight and moral reasoning: therefore, "Society as a whole and its organizations are in the middle of a shift from the bureaucratic to the democratic ethos" (First, 2001, p. 263). The four ethical standards that inform the democratic ethos are: (1) constitutional values, (2) public interest, (3) citizenship, and (4) social equality (First, 2001, p. 263). All four are essential to eliminating the achievement gap in schools.

A study by Whitney Sherman and Margaret Grogan in 2003 shows how superintendents respond to this achievement gap. They used an ethical perspective to critique superintendents' responses to the achievement gap as measured on standardized tests in Virginia.

Sherman and Grogan (2003) investigated in 1999-2001 Virginia superintendents' perspectives on the black and white test score gap. They purposively selected superintendents to represent rural, suburban, and urban school districts across the state of Virginia.

Most of the communities were poor and had low tax bases and relatively high unemployment rates, especially among the African-American populations. One community was among the wealthiest in Virginia and four were portrayed as representing a fair percentage of all income levels. Three of the communities were undergoing a shift in population from majority black to majority white. A standard, open-ended interview guide was developed (Patton, 1990) to make certain that all respondents addressed the same issues, and to allow them freedom to speak in their own voices and to elaborate on their perceptions of the black and white test score gap in their districts. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to reduce researcher bias (Seidman, 1998).

At the time of data collection, many of the superintendents interviewed had not analyzed test score data in their districts according to race. During the time of data collection and analysis, the achievement gap had not received the large amount of attention in Virginia that it had in states like Texas, New York, and Maryland. Actually, it has received very little attention.

Sherman and Grogan (2003) interpreted their results through an ethics lens. This was achieved by using Starratt's (1994) multi-dimensional ethics framework for building an ethical school. This instrument declares, "The theme of critique forces educators to confront the moral issues involved when schools disproportionately benefit some groups in society and fail others" (p. 47). Such a critique requires that educators recognize

inequality and discuss which group's benefit from existing practices, which group's rule, and who defines a school system's values. As educators discuss inequitable practices, they must reflect on the theme of justice, which requires them not only to focus on the needs of a student body as a whole, but also to consider the distinctive needs of individual students. According to Starratt:

> The ethic of critique assumes a point of view about social justice and human rights; the ethic of justice assumes an ability to perceive injustice in the social order as well as some minimal level of caring, and the ethic of caring does not ignore the demands of community governance issues, but claims that caring is the ideal fulfillment of all social relationships. (p. 55)

Analyzing data gained from superintendent interviews through an ethics lens not only allowed Sherman and Grogan (2003) to critique superintendent responses to the achievement gap, but it also helped them identify the various contexts and environments that directly affected their attitudes and efforts, if any, toward reducing the gap. Through interviews, test score data, and district documents, Sherman and Grogan (2003) found that the majority of superintendents had limited knowledge of the test score gap in their districts and that, overall, very little was being done about it.

Several overarching issues emerged from their interview data: (1) geographical and community context, (2) SOL testing context, (3) working with the board, (4) the risk of going public, and (5) action.

Within a geographical and community context, the data from several districts showed decreases in the gap in single subject areas. In only two districts was there

evidence of a five-percentage point or greater decrease in the average gap of scores during that time period (1998-2000). The gap actually increased in four districts.

Since few of the schools had reached the mandated 70% passing rate, most superintendents found themselves in the middle of controversy. Some of the superintendents were distressed by the test score gaps. All of the superintendents discussed strategies for raising test scores for all children. These strategies included: before and after school tutorials, remedial summer school for students who did not pass the test, opportunities for teacher training in core content areas, and efforts to align the curriculum with the standards and tests.

Unfortunately, superintendents in more economically challenged communities experienced conflict with summer school programs for struggling students because of parent desires for their children to work during the summer. All of the superintendents argued that they were motivated to raise the Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores for all students. However, only six of the superintendents who participated in this study gave significance to and showed insight into the perception of a gap in test scores at all.

After looking at the districts' data, Sherman and Grogan (2003) discussed the superintendents' communications with their boards. Some of the superintendents had not sorted their SOL data until it was requested. Others had broken down the data, but their boards did not allow them to communicate the findings to the community in a public meeting. Reasons for this ranged from the need to avoid racial differences, to the desire to avoid another suit being filed, to the general feeling that scores can't go up in the general population due to large numbers of minority students.

Beyond the boards, superintendents had larger communities to deal with, their publics. Superintendents had to decide how to discuss the test scores, both internally and externally. Sherman and Grogan (2003) found that most of them did not mind internal discussion of racial and socioeconomic discrepancies in test scores with other faculty and administrators, but would not share with the public. Many of the superintendents argued that the perceived public reactions to the test score gap mandated their silent approach. In short, drawing public attention to the imbalance would cause an uproar. However, Sherman and Grogan (2003) did find three superintendents who were willing to take action to reduce the gap.

The common actions were: First, superintendents acknowledged publicly that there was a black and white achievement gap and they said that a gap was not only worth taking action on, but that schools could do something to close the gap. Second, school boards and communities were willing to publicly discuss the gap. This action suggests that both personal belief and contextual factors affect ethical leadership practices involving achievement gaps (Sherman & Grogan, 2003).

It is evident that superintendents in the study who (a) believed in the value of reducing achievement gaps and (b) worked in open communities displayed more ethical behavior toward eliminating unfair school practices, according to Sherman and Grogan.

Although all of the superintendents were concerned about discrepancies in test score data, few were willing take action to close the gaps by focusing on minority groups. Sherman and Grogan (2003) argue that this is morally unsupportable. Superintendents who refused to make meeting the needs of all students important are not just poor administrators, but unethical leaders.

Starratt's (1994) ethic of critique, which was used by Sherman and Grogan (2003), is aimed at disruption of a status quo that allows some students to succeed and others to fail. However, public awareness was heightened as various superintendents spoke of secret racism in their communities and lower teacher expectations for particular groups of students. This is an essential step toward breaking the cycle of continued injustice in schools.

Sherman and Grogan (2003) found that over a long period of time superintendents and school boards have excused themselves from explicitly targeting certain groups of students due to claims that the needs of the general population of students must be met.

When special attention is given to African-American students or to other minorities, discussion can be heated. The idea of equity sometimes takes precedence over the idea of equality with the result that some groups are treated differently so that they have a chance at performing equally. Starratt's (1994) ethic of justice is a response to the naming of unjust practices and "demands that the claims of the institution serve both the common good and the rights of individuals in the school" (p. 51). According to Sherman and Grogan (2003) an ethic of justice suggests a definite focus on those groups of students who have experienced and continue to experience difficulty passing standardized tests. It requires the shift from a proactive focus on raising test scores for all children to a focus that puts attention on differences among individuals and groups of students.

Despite the state's reluctance to require that school districts in Virginia attend to test score gaps when reaching benchmarks set forth by the accountability plan, three

superintendents in the study did take it upon themselves to make discrepancies known in their communities and created plans of action for closing the gaps.

Ethics and Education

Ethics concerns about major social and policy changes over the past two decades have created demands such that "educational leaders are challenged as never before" (Starratt, 2004, p. 1). These changes have created a significant role conflict for teachers (Strike et al, 2005), who are repeatedly faced with circumstances marked by difficult moral choices, which Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) describe as paradoxical dilemmas. This is particularly true when personal and professional morals diverge substantially in finding solutions to such problems (Norberg & Johansson, 2007).

The idea of authenticity in school leadership is more than a decade old (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997), but it has only recently become a high-profile discussion point in the ethics of educational leadership. Starratt (2004) identifies authenticity as one of three initial qualities of ethical leadership, in addition to responsibility and presence.

As an ethics concept, authentic leaders act in accord with their personal values and convictions, earning respect, trust, and authority for being real and true to their beliefs. Authentic leadership surpasses the inward-looking individualism of self-evaluation and self-belief (Woods, 2007, p. 295). It is also relational in the sense of being culturally rooted and representing shared values. Taking this broader holistic view, Woods (2007) conceptualizes authentic leadership in three consistent dimensions of values in action: personal authenticity (being true to oneself and maximizing opportunities to obtain self knowledge and personal development), ideal authenticity (aspiring to professional ideals and one's full potential as an ethical leader), and social

authenticity (in being faithful to meeting the expectations, values, and beliefs of both the school community and the overall social community served by the school).

School leaders, for instance, in considering moral action, must consider professional codes of practice and human rights legislation, not only because they are conditions for employment, but also because, regardless of their restrictions in the judgment of essentials, they can provide a valuable heuristic tool for ethical deliberation (Sherman, 1999, p. 39).

Starratt (1994) originally identified three key ethics in the context of school leadership: the ethics of justice, critique, and care, which are rooted in "basic assumptions about the way societies and organizations should be organized" (Starratt, 2004, p. 7). Added to these are the foundational virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence, which are "needed to infuse and energize the work of schools and hence the work of leaders in schools" (Starratt, 2004, p. 9).

Justice, as defined by Starratt (1994, p. 51), "demands that the claims of the institution serve both the common good and the rights of individuals in the school." The high merit of care exceeds that of justice through goodwill and empathy, particularly in supporting the weak and the disadvantaged student, or in supporting colleagues who may be experiencing difficulties.

Research Objective

The Houston Independent School District's number one goal is to eliminate any achievement gaps among student groups as measured by the statewide TAKS examination (HISD Connect, *HISD Board of Education*, 2007). According to the Board of Education (2007), by 2014 the achievement gap in all tests taken will decrease by 5

percentage points annually; this includes gaps between white and African-American students and white and Hispanic students.

HISD is currently using a pilot program in 15 elementary schools and three middle schools to close the achievement gap between students who are economically disadvantaged and/or members of minority groups and those who are not (HISD Connect, *HISD Board of Education*, 2007). This web-based math program, Reasoning Minds, was developed for grades 2 through 7. Many Cornelius Elementary School students—who benefited from this program—performed well on the math 2009 administration of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test. Cornelius fifth-graders performed at nearly the same level as peers in Highland Park ISD, 100% passing and 74% earning "commended" status.

According to the Board of Education (2007), Highland Park ISD, whose student body is made up of only 3%t minority and no economically disadvantaged youth, was not far ahead, with a 100% passing rate and 78% "commended" status. The Cornelius student body is 98% minority and 86% economically disadvantaged.

According to Texas Governor Rick Perry, the best aspect of the Reasoning Minds program is it allows students to work at their own pace. "This doesn't take the place of a teacher," Perry explained. "It frees them up to work more with individual students." HISD's math program provides the opportunity for children to receive extra assistance without holding back the rest of the class; and it also allows the gifted students to work ahead if they want to.

HISD, which is under the close scrutiny of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), is using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009. The act provides

funds to improve student achievement and to reduce the achievement gap through school improvement and strategic reform (HISD Connect, *Guidance for the Implementation of the Title I and IDEA Stimulus Funds*, 2009). These funds are to be used in the following areas: high quality professional development, teacher incentives and stipends for furthering professional knowledge, upgrading technology, and improving retention programs, which includes content-based mentoring.

The objective in this study is to determine whether a sample of HISD teachers in two schools support the effort to close the achievement gap between black students and white students. In addition, I would like to determine whether this sample of teachers supports the application of public relations theory to the mobilization of support for closing the gap. More specifically, do teachers believe they have an ethical obligation to help resolve the problem through responsible advocacy?

Research Questions

An assumption in this research—an assumption backed up by prior research and TEA data—is that most white students in the Houston Independent School District are benefiting from existing district and school practices, while many African-American and underprivileged students are being left behind.

Another assumption is that teachers perceive an achievement gap, that they have attitudes about it, and that they believe that it is (or is not) their obligation to speak out about this issue. The following research questions guide this research:

RQ1: Does a sample of teachers perceive that it is important for a teacher to engage in responsible advocacy or advocacy-like activities to help close the achievement gap?

RQ2: Do teachers perceive that moral-ethical leadership and an ethic of community can have a positive impact on a school and its teachers and students?

RQ3: How do the teachers in these two target schools perceive their own schools, their schools' teachers, and their schools' students?

RQ4: Do teachers perceive a need for more professional development, training, mentoring or other support to help them instruct students who may be at risk?

Chapter Three: Methodology

This exploratory study used a survey methodology to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. Exploratory research is a type of research conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. With that being said, this type of research is appropriate in this study, since previous scholars have struggled in clearly defining responsible advocacy. Exploratory research often depends on secondary research such as reviewing available literature and/or data, or qualitative approaches such as informal discussions with consumers, employees, management or competitors, and more formal approaches through in-depth interviews, focus groups, projective methods, case studies or pilot studies. Many of the previously stated resources were prominent in helping me perform my research and compile my results. The population surveyed and the survey instrument used in this research is detailed in this chapter.

Non-Random Sample of Teachers

I drew a non-random, convenience sample from a population comprised of teachers in two HISD schools: Garden Villas Elementary and Albert Thomas Middle School. I believe the non-random sample is appropriate because this is primarily a qualitative study aimed at identifying variables that are critical to research in public relations and education. These results should help those individuals who wish to build quantitative or qualitative research on these findings. Research questions are posed to guide the research, rather than to test relationships empirically.

The schools from which the teachers were selected were chosen based on their

Title I status, demographics, and numbers of low-income neighborhoods. The communities in which these schools are located are poor, with low tax bases and high unemployment rates.

Garden Villas Elementary is a Magnet fine arts academy that serves just over 1,000 students. This school consists of approximately 60 teachers, with a 1-to-25 teacher-student ratio. Thirty Garden Villas Elementary School teachers participated in this research.

The teachers serving this school are 50% African-American, 30% Hispanic, and 20% white. Fifty percent of the Garden Villas staff had ten or fewer years of teaching experience. Their student body is comprised of 30% African American, 60% Hispanic and 10% white students. Although 76% of students at this school are classified as at-risk, research shows that over the last five years they have begun closing the achievement gap by growing from academically acceptable to exemplary, the highest rating.

Albert Thomas Middle School is in a Vanguard neighborhood with a student population of approximately 600. Of the 600 students, 70% are at-risk in some area-academically, economically, or special needs. This school consists of approximately 40 teachers, with a 1-to-35 teacher-student ratio. Thirty Thomas Middle School teachers participated in this research.

The teachers serving this school are 95% African-American and 5% white. Seventy percent of the Albert Tomas Middle School staff had ten or fewer years of teaching experience. Its student body is 75% African-American, 20% Hispanic, and 5% white. Over the last five years, research shows, Albert Thomas Middle School continued to struggle to meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) goals.

To recruit teachers to participate in the research, I posted fliers at the schools. Teachers were asked to contact me if they were interested in participating and met the listed requirements. After the teacher's qualifications were confirmed, I introduced myself and provided participates with the necessary materials and instructions to successfully complete the survey.

To be eligible to participate, teachers had to be from Title I and low-performing schools (all were), and have one to ten years of teaching experience. I chose Title I and low-performing schools because I wanted to focus on teachers who are pressured to succeed, but who have limited resources. I chose teachers having no more than ten years of experience because they presumably are being introduced to more recent strategies and technology-based systems. More experienced teachers sometimes find it difficult to transition to new ways of reaching children and going the extra mile to succeed.

The following figure shows the responses of selected teachers to survey items 1-4, and 28 (see Appendix A). The teachers represent a wide range of grades and a variety of students, as shown in Figure 1. Twenty-seven, for example, teach special education students. Teachers are overwhelmingly dissatisfied with current levels of student achievement.

Figure 1
Backgrounds of Sample Teachers

Question	**Garden Villas Elementary**	**Albert Thomas Middle School**
What is your role (s) at this school?	Pre-K-Kindergarten = 5 1st-2nd Grade = 10 3rd-5th Grade = 15	6th-8th Grade = 30
Do you provide services to the following types of students?	Migrant education students = 2 Special education = 12 Students for whom English is a second language = 20	Migrant education students = 0 Special education = 15 Students for whom English is a second language = 7
How many years have you been a teacher?	Less than one year = 1 1 to 2 years = 5 3 to 5 years = 12 6 to 10 years = 12	Less than one year = 2 1 to 2 years = 6 3 to 5 years = 15 6 to 10 years = 7
What is your race or ethnicity?	African American (Not Hispanic) = 13 American Indian or Alaska Native = 0 Asian = 0 White (Not Hispanic) = 2 Hispanic = 15 Other or Multi-ethnic = 0	African American (Not Hispanic) = 29 American Indian or Alaska Native = 0 Asian = 0 White (Not Hispanic) = 1 Hispanic = 0 Other or Multi-ethnic = 0
Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with current levels of student achievement?	Satisfied = 5 Dissatisfied = 25	Satisfied = 3 Dissatisfied = 27

Survey Instrument

The six-page survey instrument was divided into 14 parts, as shown in Appendix A: (1) information about the teacher (years taught, race); (2) teachers' perceptions of school goals (promotes academic success, provides adequate counseling and support); (3) teachers' areas of professional development (working with diverse groups, closing the achievement gap); (4) perceived characteristics of students (motivation to learn, behavior); (5) perceived student achievement; (6) expectations for students; (7) aspirations for and information about higher education (percentage of students wanting to attend college); (8) curriculum and instruction (rigor of curricula); (9) school practices (staff shares ideas to improve school); (10) perceptions of support for collegiality; (11)

moral leadership and the ethic of community (moral leadership can create an ethical school); (12) ethic of community (improves achievement); (13) effective moral leadership practice (communicating effectively); and (14) attitudes toward responsible advocacy.

Items for the instrument pertaining to education were drawn from prior research, some of which is cited in this thesis, from conversations with educators, and from popular articles about the education gap in public schools. Items for the public relations issues (primarily part 14) are drawn mainly from academic research in public relations.

I selected Starratt's (1994) multi-dimensional ethical framework as a guide in preparing this survey instrument and in interpreting findings. Staratt's work is the primary foundation of parts 3, 9, and 11-14. These identified parts measure the moral characteristics emphasized in Staratt's framework. The specified parts imply or reinforce the notion that individuals are the primary moral agents who have impact on schooling, which coincides with Staratt's (1991) suggestion that leaders should be guided in their roles as moral agents by the three ethical domains of justice, care, and critique. Staratt (1991) suggests "the nature of learning itself is intrinsically a moral activity. Leadership within that morally charged environment involves educators necessarily in attending to the moral character of what the community is called to do so" (p. 3). This multi-dimensional tool helped to determine how district and school practices might create inequality when not operating from an inclusive framework, such as creating an ethical learning environment.

Chapter Four: Results

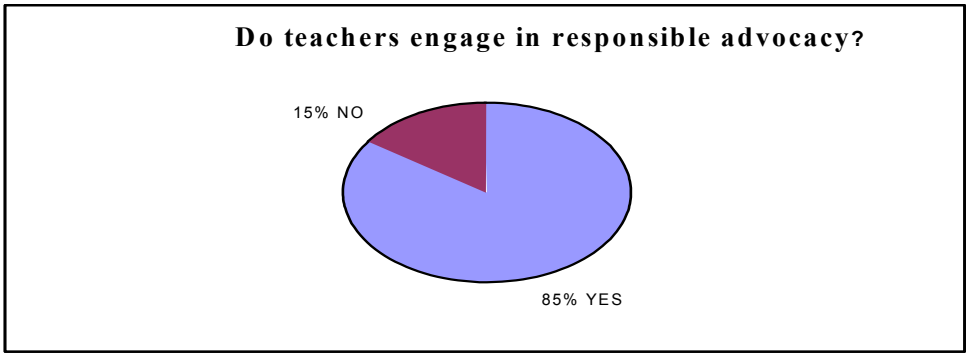
This qualitative study was designed to determine whether teachers in the Houston Independent School District believe educators should be engaged in responsible advocacy or advocacy-like activities to help rally public opinion to demand closure of the achievement gap between white students and minority students. It also focused on ethical implications of any attempt by teachers to mobilize public opinion to demand change and on the perceived ethical problems in failing to address the achievement gap. A six-page, 14-part survey instrument was used to measure attitudes. Results pertaining to each of four research questions are reported in this chapter.

Perceptions of Responsible Advocacy

Research question 1 is, does a sample of teachers perceive that it is important for a teacher to engage in responsible advocacy or advocacy-like activities to help close the achievement gap? Data relating to this question are found in three sections of the survey questionnaire: part 11 (moral leadership); part 12 (the ethic of community); and part 14 (responsible advocacy).

More than 85% of the teachers surveyed said that teachers should engage in responsible advocacy, while 15% said no, as shown in Figure 2. A slightly lower percentage (76%) admitted to engaging in responsible advocacy themselves, while 24% said no.

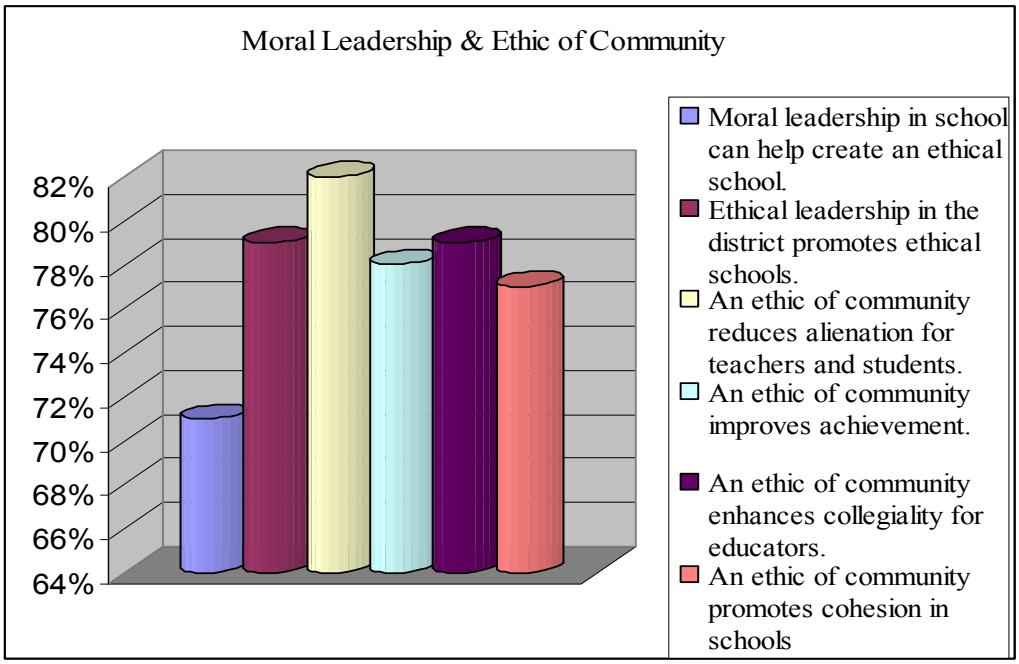
Figure 2



Responses to item 56 in part 14 also suggest that most teachers are committed to responsible advocacy. The percentages of teachers answering "yes" to the seven obligations listed in item 56 are as follows: monitoring and analyzing issues, 62%; defining concepts of teachers' social responsibility, 58%; helping develop codes of ethics, 61%; working to integrate such codes and standards into the research, planning, and operations of the educational system, 62%; public partnership, 54%; strategic risk management, 57%; and communicating to parents and communities through technology, 58%.

Research question 2 is, do teachers perceive that moral-ethical leadership and an ethic of community can have a positive impact on a school and its teachers and students? This question is related to a perceived need for responsible advocacy, for responsible advocates can help ensure that leadership is moral and that an ethic of community prevails. Items pertaining to moral leadership appear in part 11 of the survey, while items pertaining to an ethic of community appear in part 12.

Figure 3

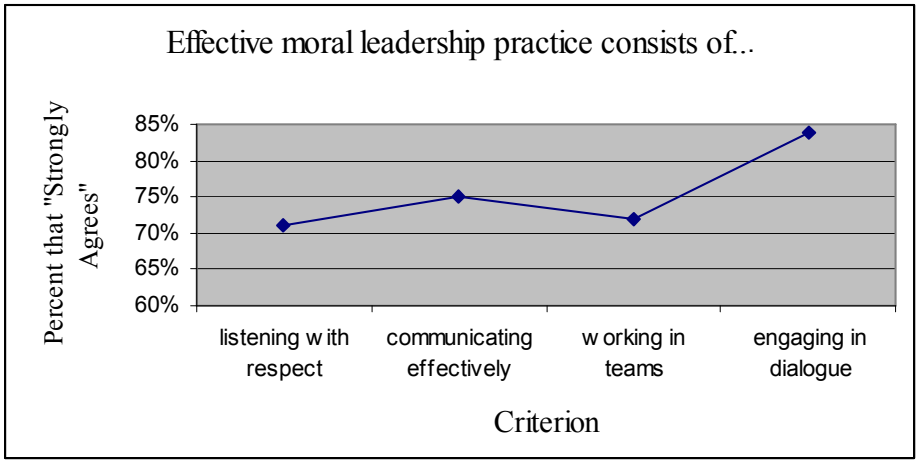


At least 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that moral and ethical leadership in a school can help create an ethical school and that moral and ethical leadership in a district can help promote ethical schools, as shown in Figure 3. At least 76% agreed that an ethic of community could help reduce teacher-student alienation, improve achievement, enhance collegiality for educators, and promote school cohesion.

Finally, teachers responded to seven behaviors that can constitute effective moral leadership. Large percentages of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to strive for knowing and understanding others, creating forums that allow all voices to be heard, and being grounded in an ethic of community in order to work toward moral purposes. On the other hand, results indicated that teachers highly valued listening with respect, communicating effectively, working in teams, and engaging in dialogue. At least

70% of all respondents “strongly agreed” that these four attributes are important, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4



Perceptions of “My” School, Teachers, and Students

Research question 3 is, how do the teachers in these two target schools perceive their own schools, their schools’ teachers, and their schools’ students? Results reported here are based on responses to items 5-16 in part 2, items 37 and 38 in part 9, item 28 in part 5, items 29-31 in part 6, and items 32-33 in part 7.

Perceptions of “My” School

Teachers at the two schools apparently are concerned about the achievement gap and most are committed to responsible advocacy or advocacy-like activities. But to what extent do they believe their schools are committed to a sound education for each pupil and to what extent do they believe their students are committed to learning?

Results suggest that teachers perceive their schools are committed to helping all students. The percentages who agree or strongly agree with 12 items about their schools (part 2 of the survey) are as follows: promotes academic success for all students, 72%;

emphasizes helping African-American students academically when they need it, 54%; emphasizes helping Hispanic students academically when they need it, 58%; emphasizes teaching lessons in ways relevant to students' daily lives and environment, 62%; provides the materials, resources, and training needed to work with special education students, 81%; gives all students equal opportunity to participate in classroom discussions and activities, 68%; emphasizes using instructional materials that reflect the culture or ethnicity of its students, 72%; has staff examine their own cultural biases through professional development or other processes, 82%; considers closing the racial/ethnic achievement gap a high priority, 68%; is welcoming to and facilitates parent involvement, 79%; and provides adequate counseling and support services for students of all ethnicity, 58%.

Tracking and other grouping practices are widely recognized as fundamental to closure of the achievement gap. Eliminating such practices would not allow for identification of individual student problems, nor would it allow for differentiated instruction, which is a potential means for closing the achievement gap. Respondents were asked in part 9 of the survey to indicate the percentage of teachers they perceived would eliminate tracking and grouping. Results showed that 3% perceived that 0-20% would eliminate tracking and grouping; 2% perceived 21-40%; 8% perceived 41-60%; 66% perceived 61-80%; and 21% perceived 81-100%.

Respondents also were asked in part 9 to indicate the percentage of staff they perceived share ideas for school improvement. Results showed 2% perceived that 0-20% share ideas for school improvement; 1% perceived 21-40%; 3% perceived 41-60%; 12% perceived 61-80%; and 82% perceived 81-100%.

Perceptions of Teachers in "My" School

Data reported in this section explore respondents' attitudes toward their colleagues' teaching approaches. For example, one of the common complaints about public school education is that educators teach to the standardized test, focusing on "bubble students" who have at least a chance to pass and essentially ignoring those who have no chance and those who will pass easily. Thirty-nine percent of teachers in this survey said that 41-60% of their colleagues teach to the test, while 42% perceive that 61-100% teach to the test, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5
Perceptions of Colleagues' Teaching Approaches

Curriculum and Instruction	0-40%	41-60%	61-100%
(34) What percentage of your student population is learning a rigorous, challenging curriculum built around higher order thinking?	27%	48%	25%
(35) What percentage of the teachers at your school are investigating and trying to learn and use strategies that are proven to meet the needs of a diverse student population?	10%	37%	53%
(36) What percentage of teachers at your school mainly focus their daily lesson plans toward the success of standardized testing?	19%	39%	42%

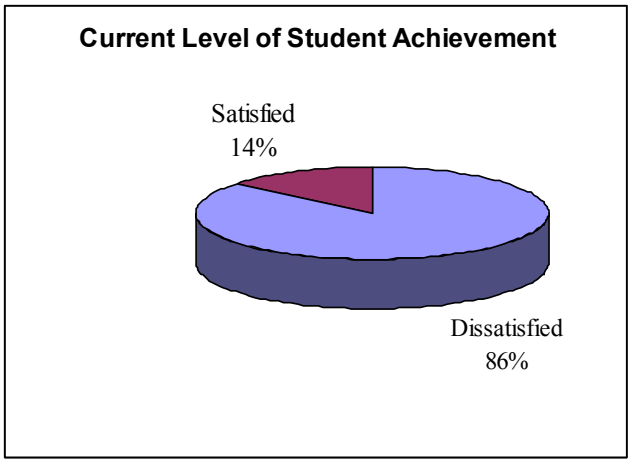
Teachers were asked what percentages of their student populations were learning a rigorous curriculum, which is an indirect measure of perceived teacher performance. As shown in Figure 5, 73% of the teachers perceived that more than 40% of the students were learning a rigorous curriculum that promotes critical thinking skills (item 34).

Finally, teachers were asked what percentages of teachers are investigating and trying new strategies for a diverse student population (item 35). As shown in Figure 5, more than half of the surveyors believed that 61-100% of the teachers are trying new strategies to reach all students.

Perceptions of Students in "My" School

Teachers seem committed to closing the achievement gap and they perceive that their schools are taking steps to remedy this problem, but responses to item 28, part 5 of the survey instrument, suggest they are dissatisfied with current levels of student achievement. As shown in Figure 6, only 14% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with current levels of student achievement, figures that seem to contradict responses to items 34, 35, and 36 in Figure 5.

Figure 6



The dissatisfaction with the level of student achievement may have much to do with teachers' perceptions of their students' study habits, behavior, and motivation (section 4 of the survey). Of the 60 teachers surveyed, 72% noted that few students:

- Spend time completing homework with parent supervision
- Spend time completing homework with no parent supervision
- Are motivated to learn
- Are well-behaved
- Arrive at school alert and rested

Results indicate that 20% of the surveyed teachers feel that 61-100% of their student population is capable of achieving on or above grade level (Item 29), although 27% believe 0-40% can achieve on or above grade level, as shown in Figure 7. Twenty-seven percent believe that 61-100% should be prepared to pursue college (item 30). However, the majority perceives that 41-60% of their students are prepared to go to college. Fifty-two percent of teachers perceive that 41-60% of their students are interested in attending a college or university (item 32) and 23% perceive that 61-100% is interested. However, 35% of the teachers believe that only 0-40% of their student population and parents are sufficiently well informed to even make decisions about college (item 33) and 10% think 61-100% are sufficiently informed.

Figure 7
Teachers' Expectations for Students

Expectation	0-40%	41-60%	61-100%
(29) What percentage of your student population do you think is capable of achieving on or above grade level?	27%	53%	20%
(30) What percentage of your student population do you think should be prepared to pursue college?	0%	73%	27%
(31) What percentage of your student population do you think is prepared to pursue college?	34%	56%	10%
(32) What percentage of your student population do you believe is interested in attending a college or university?	25%	52%	23%
(33) What percentage of your student population and parents is well prepared to make well informed decisions about college?	35%	55%	10%

Perceived Need for Professional Development

Research question 4 is, do teachers perceive a need for more professional development, training, and mentoring or other support to help them instruct students who may be at risk? At least some aspects of professional development help teachers learn about and develop strategies to implement differentiated instruction, or tailoring different

strategies and lessons to students of varying achievement levels, so it is important to know how teachers feel about developing their skills. Six items in part 3 of the survey pertain to areas of professional development that are needed to help teachers succeed. At least 86 % of teachers in the two target schools did in fact see a need for professional development in four areas:

- Working with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural groups
- Serving the students for whom English is a second language
- Closing the achievement gap
- Servicing special education

Research shows that positive behavioral support and classroom management (item 18) and meeting the social, emotional, and developmental needs of youth (item 22) play a role in school improvement. However, less than 20% of the teachers felt these were criterion that would require additional professional development.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This research explored the relationship of public relations strategy, particularly responsible advocacy and advocacy-related techniques, ethics, and the achievement gap separating many white and black students—as perceived by teachers in two public schools in the Houston Independent School District.

Most teachers endorsed responsible advocacy and many perceived that they are currently engaged in responsible advocacy. Furthermore, results suggest the existence of a consistent and appreciable perception that it is valuable to (1) know the types of problems schools and teachers typically encounter, (2) visualize a process to address the achievement gap, (3) undergo more professional development to help teachers educate diverse populations, (4) understand how effective moral leadership plays a major role in establishing ethical schools and districts, and (5) understand how values—such as justice, critique, and care—might help guide an individual's ethical practice in schools.

One may assume, based on these findings, that it is unethical, or at least unacceptable, to remain silent about the achievement gap or to stand apart from any campaign to close the gap. One may also wonder when and if HISD officials will urge teachers to help mobilize public opinion behind efforts to close the achievement gap.

Teachers also were asked to identify the kinds of actions they perceive will work to close the achievement gap. It is clear they consider the ethic of authencity an important foundation for educational leadership as it points teachers toward more self-responsible forms of relationships and leadership.

This supports Starratt's (2004) view that the authentic educational leader acts with the good of others (i.e., students, parents, and community) as a primary reference.

Authentic educators help create and support the conditions that promote authentic teaching and learning, which are needed to close the achievement gaps. As an authentic leader, one cannot offer excuses (passing the buck), such as "my actions won't make any difference" or "it's not my problem."

Leadership that promotes and supports authentic learning requires, according to Starratt (2004), a commitment to three ethics: ethic of authencity, ethic of responsibility, and ethic of presence. As a team player, the teacher is generally expected to follow the directions of the team leader without argument. However, responsible advocates are expected to be subjective. Subjectivity comes with an implicit understanding that one's first loyalty is to her student's improvement. On the other hand, advocates bring skills of persuasion to transform issues as they are defined by management. As responsible advocates, teachers may feel responsible for the authencity of the learning for students in their schools. Ethicist Will Barrett (2004) argues the following:

> Moral responsibility assumes a capacityfor making rational decisions, which in turn justifies holding moral agents accountable for their actions. Given that moral agency entails responsibility, in that autonomous rational agents are in principle capable of responding to moral reasons, accountability is a necessary feature of morality.

The ethic of responsibility, as described by Starratt (2004), states that responsible leaders have the courage of their convictions and stand up for what is ethically and morally right with regard to the ways in which teachers and students are engaged with the learning process (including closing the achievement gap). The study confirmed that teachers perceive that responsible, moral leadership can help create an ethical school.

On the other hand, the ethic of community is useful in countering the underlying assumption of much of the "traditional" research on leadership—that "heroic" leaders can provide the vision and expertise to overcome the many challenges facing public schooling and lead schools in transformative directions (Bogotch, 2002).

Social justice has attained a new strength and urgency in education for several reasons, including the growing diversity of school populations (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002), the increasing records of the achievement and economic gaps between mainstream and minority children (Coleman, 1990), and the propagation of social injustice as played out in schools, including the injustices that may arise from the current policy environment of high-stakes assessment and accountability (Rapp, 2002). Social justice requires a purposeful intervention that challenges fundamental inequities and works toward better educational and economic outcomes for minority students.

Conclusion

The systematic, multi-dimensional ethical framework that emerged from this research provides an organizational and personal guide and establishes a concrete connection between the ethical model and responsible advocacy. This suggests that public relations is not merely a counseling profession, it also is a profession that can employ the techniques of responsible advocacy.

A teacher in this research who endorses responsible advocacy and who acts as an advocate takes up the cause of the minority students and works to promote closing the achievement gap. It is possible for tension to develop between employers and employees who are responsible advocates, particularly when employers view advocate-employees as disloyal. This can be particularly disrupting as loyalty is valued in most organizations, as

Bivins (1989) argues. As long as the moral environment of the organization is conducive to the well being of most of the parties affected by that organization's actions, that loyalty is not misplaced.

Finally, this multi-dimensional ethical framework provides an explicit space for the intersection of ethical standards and leadership principles. The need to provide a clear and concrete praxis between theory and practice is particularly justified in the domain of ethical leadership in education. This study provides an excellent starting point for thoughtful discussion about the role and impact of ethics on decisions made by teacher-advocates. It would be helpful for school districts to provide future and present educational leaders with opportunities to engage in areas of professional development that creates the ethic of community.

Authencity in leadership is central to leadership practice that is ethical and moral. One can conclude that authentic educational leaders must also focus on the core values of schooling (authentic teaching and learning). According to Duignan (2004), such leadership is educative in its objective and outcomes. It is based on three ethics: the ethic of authencity; the ethic of responsibility; and the ethic of presence (Duignan, 2004). It is the ethic of presence that brings authencity and responsibility together in authentic leadership for authentic learning.

According to Bivins (1989) it is generally accepted that the first job of public relations professionals is to establish a methodical understanding of the issue that they may be addressing on behalf of the potential client. Without that initial assessement, no professional should ethically continue to assume the role of advocate and the moral

responsibility that role effects. Therefore, proper ordering of priorities should lead to a thorough understanding of any issue.

In conclusion, this study has found that the commitment to the ethic of community is the foundation for moral leadership practice in 21st century schools.

Limitations

No study is without its limitations. The survey is an exploratory study of teachers' perceptions. Results cannot be generalized beyond teachers who participated in this research; they may not be generalized even to the two schools where the teachers worked.

This survey of teachers' perceptions was limited to the multi-dimensional framework created by Starratt. In another study, different communication researchers might eliminate some categories from the framework and/or add others. For example, some researchers may give a great deal of attention to accountability, while others might place less or even more emphasis on the role of ethics and morals.

Finally, results are somewhat limited because of a lack of consensus about what responsible advocacy and advocacy techniques are. Defining responsible advocacy seems to be an ongoing struggle because the concept is so broad and applies well to many aspects of public relations and to political, social, educational, and economic issues and problems. Nor is it easy to define a teacher's role as a responsible advocate because responsibility is individually defined.

Project Significance

Despite these limitations, results are important because they constitute an important map of the relationship between responsible advocacy and the achievement gap

separating black and white students. Key constructs have been identified and feedback about these constructs has been obtained.

Results are important also because they offer a better understanding of how one may balance her own personal beliefs with a need to give attention to social issues and problems. This is particularly true for teachers. If they are committed to helping students achieve their potentials through education, it follows that they would try to resolve problems outside the classroom, problems that might reduce their effectiveness as teachers and hinder their students' learning.

This study should help public relations scholars and practitioners understand more deeply the link between public relations and responsible advocacy. For example, social justice, which may be completely appropriate from an ethical views, cannot be a means of self-gratification, self-sanctification, or self-preservation. Practitioners and scholars must ask new questions rooted in an ethics context. They must remember, however, that while justice responds and care honors, it is critique that uncovers. This study can help public relations scholars and practitioners advance research in responsible advocacy, as well as ethics in public relations.

In closing, through this study it has been made clear that there is a relationship between public relations, responsible advocacy, ethics, risk management and strategies to close the achievement gap. My results suggest that teachers can be moblized to be responsible advocates for change. Therefore one may infer that other organizations might consider using their employees as responsible advocates.

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Part 1

1. What is your role (s) at this school?

___ Pre-K- Kindergarten Teacher
___ 1st-2nd Grade Teacher
___ 3rd-5th Grade Teacher
___ 6th-8th Grade Teacher

2. Do you provide services to the following types of students? (Mark all that apply)

___ Migrant education students
___ Special education
___ Students for whom English is a second language

3. How many years have you been a teacher?

___ Less than one year
___ 1 to 2 years
___ 3 to 5 years
___ 6 to 10 years

4. What is your race or ethnicity?

___ African American (Not Hispanic)
___ American Indian or Alaska Native
___ Asian
___ White (Not Hispanic)
___ Hispanic
___ Other or Multi-ethnic _____

Part 2

This school…	***Strongly Agree***	***Agree***	***Strongly Disagree***	***Disagree***	***Neutral***
5. Promotes academic success for all students.					
6. Emphasizes helping African-American students academically when they need it.					
7. Emphasizes helping Hispanic students academically when they need it.					
8. Emphasizes teaching lessons in ways relevant to students' daily lives and environment.					

9. Provides the materials, resources and training needed to work with special education students.					
10. Gives all students equal opportunity to participate in classroom discussions or activities.					
11. Gives all students equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular and enrichment activities.					
12. Emphasizes using instructional materials that reflect the culture or ethnicity of its students.					
13. Has staff examine their own cultural biases through professional development or other processes.					
14. Considers closing the racial/ethnic achievement gaps a high priority.					
15. Is welcoming to and facilitates parent involvement.					
16. Provides adequate counseling and support services for students of all ethnicity.					

Part 3

Do you feel that you need more professional development, training, mentorship or other support to do your job in any of the following areas?

Area of Professional Development

	Yes	***No***	***Not Applicable***
17. Working with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural groups			
18. Positive behavioral support and classroom management			
19. Serving the students for whom English is a second language			
20. Closing the achievement gap			
21. Serving special education students			
22. Meeting the social, emotional, and developmental needs of youth			

Part 4

Based on your experience, how many students at this school…

	Nearly All	***Most***	***Some***	***Few***	***Almost None***
23. Spend time completing homework with no parent present?					
24. Spend time completing homework with parent supervision?					
25. Are motivated to learn?					
26. Are well-behaved?					
27. Arrive at school alert and rested?					

Part 5

Achievement

28. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with current levels of student achievement?

SATISFIED___ DISSATISFIED___

Part 6

Expectations

29. What percentage of your student population do you think is capable of achieving on or above grade level?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

30. What percentage of your student population do you think should be prepared to pursue college?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

31. What percentage of your student population do you think is prepared to pursue college?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

Part 7

Aspirations for and Information
About Higher Education

32. What percentage of your student population do you believe is interested in attending a college or university?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

33. What percentage of your student population and parents is well prepared to make well informed decisions about college?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

Part 8

Curriculum and Instruction

34. What percentage of your student population is learning a rigorous, challenging curriculum built around higher order thinking?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

35. What percentage of the teachers at your school are investigating and trying to learn and use strategies that are proven to meet the needs of a diverse student population?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

36. What percentage of the teachers at your school mainly focus their daily lesson plans toward the success of standardized testing?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

Part 9

School Practices

37. What percentage of the staff is interested in eliminating tracking and other grouping practices?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

38. What percentage of the staff shares ideas for school improvement?

0-20%___ 21-40%___ 41-60%___ 61-80%___ 81-100%___

Part 10

Perceptions of Support for Collegiality
Please check YES or NO

39. Is your school promoting joint problem solving to raise student achievement?

YES ___ NO ___

40. Is time set aside on a regular basis for the teachers at your school to develop and share strategies to close the achievement gap?

YES ___ NO ___

Part 11

Moral Leadership and the Ethic of Community

	Strongly Agree	***Agree***	***Disagree***	***Strongly Disagree***	***Neutral***
41. Moral leadership in a school can help create an ethical school.					
42. Ethical leadership practice in the school district is likely to be effective in helping a school create an ethical environment.					

Part 12

Ethic of Community
-moral responsibility to engage in communal processes as educators to pursue the moral purposes of their work and address the on going challenges of daily life and work in schools. An ethic of community can…

	Strongly Agree	***Agree***	***Disagree***	***Strongly Disagree***	***Neutral***
43. reduce the sense of alienation for students.					
44. reduce the sense of alienation for teachers.					
45. improve achievement.					
46. enhance collegiality for educators.					
47. promote social units of learning, creativity and constructive action within schools.					

Part 13

Effective moral leadership practice consists of …

	Strongly Agree	***Agree***	***Disagree***	***Strongly Disagree***	***Neutral***
48. listening with respect.					
49. striving for knowing and understanding others.					
50. communicating effectively.					
51. working in teams.					
52. engaging in dialogue.					
53. creating forums that allow all voices to be heard.					
54. being grounded in an ethic of community in order to work toward moral purposes.					

Part 14

Responsible Advocacy *is a social norm that holds that a social institution is responsible for their behavior (including each individual member's behavior) and may be held accountable for their misdeeds. This definition is still quite broad. The reason why responsible advocacy is not clearly defined is because being responsible is individually defined.*

55. Do you think teachers should engage in responsible advocacy?
Please check YES or NO.

YES____ NO____

56. Do you engage in responsible advocacy?
Please check YES or NO.

YES____ NO____

56. If yes to the prior questions, what obligations do you feel teachers have to their communities?
Check ALL that apply.

__ Monitoring and analyzing issues __ Public partnership

__ Helping develop codes of ethics __ Strategic risk management

__ Working to integrate such codes and standards into the research, planning, and operations of the educational system

__ Communicating to parents and communities through technology

__ Defining concepts of teachers' social responsibility

References

Baker, B.D., & Green, P.C., III. 2005. Tricks of the trade: State legislative actions in school finance policy that perpetuates racial disparities in the post-Brown era. *American Journal of Education*, *111*, pp. 372-413.

Barrett, W. 2004. "Responsibility, Accountability and Corporate Activity", *Online Opinion: Australia's E-Journal of Social and Political Debate.* http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=2480#. (retrieved October 1, 2010).

Beers, K. 2005. With equity for all. *Voices From the Middle 13*(*1*), pp. 4-7.

Bell, D. 2004. Silent covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the unfulfilled hopes for racial reform. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bhindi, N. & Duignan, P. 1997. "Leadership for a New Century: Authenticity, Intentionality, Spirituality and Sensibility", *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 25 (2): pp. 117-132.

Bivins, T.H. 1989. "Professional Advocacy in Public Relations: Ethical Considerations," *Business and Professional Ethics Journal*, 6 (1): pp. 82-91.

Bogotch, I.E. 2002. Educational Leadership and Social Justice: Practice into Theory. *Journal of School Leadership*, 12: pp. 138-156.

Booher-Jennings, J. 2005. Below the Bubble. "Educational Triage" and the Texas Accountability System. *American Educational Research Journal*. (42): pp. 231-268.

Brown v. Board of Education (Brown I), 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Brown v. Board of Education (Brown I), 349 U.S. 294 (1955).

Coleman, J.S. 1990. Equality and Achievement in Education. San Francisco: Westview.

Covello, V.T. & Mumpower, J, 1985. "Risk Analysis and Risk Management: An Historical Perspective", *Risk Analysis* (5): pp. 103-119.

Covello, V.T. 1992. "Risk Communication: An Emerging Area of Health Communication Research", *in Communication Yearbook* 15, ed. Stanley A. Deetz (Newbury Park, CA: Sage): p. 359.

Darling-Hammond, L. 2004. Standards, accountability, and school reform. *Teachers College Record* 106 (6): pp.1047-1085.

Duignan, P.A. 2004. "Authentic Leadership for Authentic Learning", *ACEL Scholar Traveling Scholar,* pp.1-6.

Ecks, S.E. 2004. The fiftieth anniversary of Brown: Is there any reason to celebrate? *Equity and Excellence in Education*, (37): pp. 219-226.

First, P. 2001. The new superintendency as guardian of justice and care. In C. Brunner and L. Bjork (eds.) *The New Superintendency* (Amsterdam: Jai Press), pp. 249-266.

Fitzpatrick, K. & Gauthier, C. 2001. "Toward a Professional Responsibility Theory of Public Relations Ethics", *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 16 (2-3): pp.193-212.

Fitzpatrick, K. & Bronstein, C. 2006. Ethics in Public Relations: Responsible Advocacy. Sage Publications.p. 135.

Freeman, E. 2005. No child left behind and the denigration of race. *Equity and Excellence in Education* 38 (3): pp. 19-29.

Glenn, W.J. 2006. Separate But Not Yet Equal: The Relation Between School Finance Adequacy Litigation and African American Student Achievement. *Peabody Journal of Education*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 81 (3): pp. 63-93.

Goldring, E., & Greenfield, W. 2002. Understanding the Evolving Concept of Leadership in Education: Roles, Expectations, and Dilemmas. In J. Murphy (Ed), *The Educational Leadership Challenge: Redefining Leadership for the 21st Century. One Hundred First Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education.* Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education. pp. 1-19.

Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, 377 U.S. 218 (1964).

Grunig, J.E. & White, J. 1992. "The Effect of Worldviews on Public Relations Theory and Practice", *Excellence Pubic Relations and Communication*, ed. James E. Grunig (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum): p.31-64.

Grunig, J.E. & Hunt, T. 1984. Managing Public Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston): p. 59.

Guidance for the Implementation of the Title I and IDEA Stimulus Funds. 2009. HISD Connect. http://houstonisd.org. (retrieved May 1, 2009).

HISD Board of Education. 2007. HISD Connect. http://www.houstonisd.org. (retrieved January 17, 2009).

Jimerson, L. 2005. Placism in NCLB-How rural children are left behind. *Equity and*

Excellence in Education 38 (3): pp. 211-219.

Kahlenburg, R.D. 2001-2002. Beyond Brown: The new wave of desegregation litigation. *Educational leadership*. 59 (4): pp.13-19.

Kohn, A., and R. Henkin. 2002. Poor teaching for poor kids. Language Arts 79 (3): p. 251-255.

Kowalski, T. 1999. The School superintendent. (Columbus, OH: Merrill).

Leiss, W.; and Palenchar M.J. and Heath R.L. 2002. "Another Part of his Risk Communication Model: Analysis of Communication Processes and Message Content," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 13(2): pp.127-158.

Lipman, P. 1998. Race, class, and power in school restructuring (Albany, NY: SUNY Press).

Milliken v. Bradley (Milliken I), 418 U.S. 717 (1974).

National Center for Fair and Open Testing. 2007. Fair Test. http://www.fairtest.org. (accessed April 13, 2008).

National Research Council. 1989. *Improving Risk Communication*. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press): p. 21.

No Child Left Behind. 2005. http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing. Jhtml?src=pb (accessed March 26, 2008).

Norberg, K. & Johansson, O. 2007. "Ethical Dilemmas of Swedish School Leaders: Contrasts and Common Themes", *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 35 (2): pp. 277-294.

Palenchar M.J. and Heath R.L. 2006. "Responsible Advocacy Through Strategic Risk Communication", *Ethics in Public Relations Responsible Advocacy,* pp. 131-153.

Patton, M. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage).

Pennington, H. 2006. Expanding Learning Time in High Schools. *Center for American Progress.* http://www.americanprogress.org. (accessed January 17, 2009).

Phillips, V. 2000. Finishing the race: A district perspective of standards-based reform. In T. Duggan and M. Holmes (eds) *Closing the Gap* (Washington D.C.: Council for Basic Education), pp. 39-50.

Plough, A & Krimsky, S. 1987. "The Emergence of Risk Communication Studies; Social and Political Context", *Science, Technology & Human Values* 12(3-4): pp.4-10.

Popham, J.W. 2005. How to use PAP to make AYP under NCLB. *Phi Delta Kappan* 86 (10): pp. 787-791.

Ramirez, A. 1999. Assessment-driven reform: The emperor still have no clothes. *Phi Delta Kappan* 81 (3): pp. 204-208.

Rapp, D. 2002. Social Justice and the Importance of Rebellious, Oppositional Imaginations. *Journal of School Leadership*, (12): pp. 226-245.

Roellke, C., Green, P.C., III, & Zielewski, E.H. 2004. School finance litigation: The promises and limitations of the third wave. Peabody Journal of Education (79): pp.104-133.

Rossman, G.B. & Rallis S.F. 1998. *Learning in the Field: An introduction to qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).

Ryan, J.E. 1999a. Schools, race and money. *Yale Law Journal* (109): pp. 249-316.

Ryan, J.E. 1999b. Sheff, segregation, and school finance litigation. *New York University Law Review* (74): pp. 529-573.

Seidman, I. 1998. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press).

Shapiro, J.P. & Stefkovich, J.A. 2005. *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sherman, N. 1999. "Character Development and Aristotelian Virtue", in Carr, D. & Steutel, J. (eds.) *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*, London: Routledge.

Sherman, W.H & Grogan M. 2003. Superintendents' responses to the achievement gap: an ethical critique. The *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, July-September, 6 (3): pp.223-237.

Skrla, L. 2000. *Equity-Driven Achievement-Focused School Districts* (The University of Texas at Austin, The Charles A. Dana Center).

Starratt, R.J. 1991. Building an Ethical School: A theory for practice in educational Leadership. Educational Administration Quarterly 27 (2): pp.185-202.

Starratt, R.J. 1994. *Building an Ethical School*: A practical response to the moral crisis in schools (Washington, DC: Falmer Press).

Starratt, R.J. 2004. *Ethical Leadership*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stone, J. D. 2005. "Public Relations and Public Responsibility." Public Relations Quarterly Spring 50 (1): pp. 31-34.

Strike, K.A., Haller, E.J. & Soltis, J.F. 2005. *The Ethics of School Administration*, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Verstegen, D.A. 1998. Judicial analysis during the new wave of school finance litigation: The new adequacy in education. *Journal of Education Finance* (24): pp. 51-68.

Wineburg, S. 2004. Crazy for history. The Journal of American History 90 (4): pp. 1401-1415.

Woods, P. 2007. "Authenticity in the Bureau-enterprise Culture: The Struggle for Authentic Meaning", *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 35 (2): pp.295-320.

Zernike, K. 2000. Racial gap in student test scores polarizes town. *New York Times*, 4 August, pp. A1, A25.