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Teacher and Staff Perception of School Climate: A Case Study

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Teacher and Staff Perception of School Climate: A Case Study

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine how different public-school teachers and staff perceive school climate at an achieving public middle school. The research sought to find relationships between teacher sub-groups and other staff members, and how they perceived the school climate, either negatively or positively. The researcher believed that there would be a positive perception of school climate, which coincided with high student achievement. Additionally, it was believed that there would be no relationship between teacher types or demographics, and how the climate would be perceived among the different groups. This paper also presents a review of the current literature and the limitations of these studies. The last section of the paper describes the personal experiences and frameworks that could potentially influence the study. The proposed study used a mixed methods approach using quantitative and qualitative methods to seek understanding of the relationships from a case study approach. This study sought to understand the following research questions: What perceptions of school climate exist within a school with high student achievement; and how do different teacher and staff member groups perceive school climate within a school with high student achievement? Answers to the following sub-questions were also sought: Do selected demographic factors have an effect on teacher perceptions of school climate; and do differences exist in how sub-groups of teachers and staff members within the same school perceive climate? The study incorporated the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Middle Schools (OCDQ-RM) by Hoy (1998) as the quantitative climate instrument. For the qualitative data, the researcher asked a series of 12 open-ended questions. A total of 53 questionnaires were returned out of 67 (rate of 79%). A total of 6 interviews were conducted. Several sub-group comparisons were made and several groups had significant differences in how they perceived the school climate on various dimensions of the OCDQ-RM.

Of all the group comparisons with significant differences, the reading group compared to the all-other participants group had the most significant differences with 4 of the 8 climate dimensions. Some primary conclusions or explanations for the reading group's perceptual differences were that they are highly monitored by administrators and instructional facilitators, the students as a whole are behind in reading to begin with, and reading is a high-stakes tested area. Other group differences and explanations are provided as well.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

Research in the area of school climate and the degree to which the perceptions of public-school teachers and faculty vary within the same middle school, within the same district, and among teacher/faculty subgroups (e.g., special education vs regular education, reading teachers vs. math teachers, etc.) is something that may intrigue and inform school leaders. School climate is often difficult to study and can be quite subjective from person to person, school to school, and so forth. Anderson (1982) stated, “the subject, however, is complex: Studying human behavior in schools, as in any organization, involves ordering and conceptualizing a buzzing confusion of simultaneously existing, multilevel, mutually interacting variables” (p. 368). William (2009), Motta (2010), and Eldred (2010) found that job satisfaction for all teachers may be affected by both school culture and school climate. The consequences of teacher perceptions of school climate may be numerous, but most importantly may affect student achievement at a significant level. Peterson and Deal (1998) reported that positive school climate would increase both teacher job satisfaction and student achievement, while a negative school climate would lead to poor job satisfaction and should have the opposite effect on student achievement. Researchers have attempted to describe climate in many multi-faceted ways, yet, Halpin and Croft (1963) provide a simple description: “personality is to the individual what ‘climate’ is to the organization” (p.1). In other words, the school’s climate is the personality of the school.

Although most public-school teachers have similar job training, ideologies, and perceptions, and are working within schools and school districts with similar job duties and goals of educating students, they are not the same. These differences include: content areas taught, support, socioeconomic status of student population, teacher salaries, and so forth (Liu, &

Meyer, 2005). For example, since reading and math are content areas that have high stakes testing linked to them, there is a higher demand on those content area teachers' performance. Also, special education students often pose more challenges for teachers, thus creating inherent differences and barriers to overcome versus their regular education colleagues (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004).

With the passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, federal mandates required that states receiving federal dollars needed to implement rigorous achievement standards for all students (e.g., Common Core Standards). This created a situation in which schools and school districts struggled to meet the goal for all students to achieve proficient or higher on grade level standardized assessments. However, in 2012 the US Department of Education began granting states more flexibility in regards to NCLB mandates. Most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) replaced NCLB. While there are some differences in the two laws, focus on student achievement and rigorous standards still remain high for all students under the new legislation.

Syed (2013) reported that curriculum changes are often the most difficult to implement because most teachers lack the resources to do so effectively. Any changes being implemented in schools may affect the school climate. Students and teachers are being mandated to shift from an individual approach to a collective approach to changing schools, and their means to increasing student achievement goals are also shifting to the collective approach (Ras, 2012). In other words, schools are now beginning to look at student achievement from the whole student population, as all students are expected to achieve high academic standards. Special education teachers have always been more individual student focused and driven by a student's Individual Education Plan, and not holistic, standards based focused, which may make a difference in how

these teachers perceive school climate. Teachers of subject areas with standardized state testing (reading and math) may also perceive the school climate differently than the other school personnel.

Change may be hard for any organization, but global changes, such as those being implemented in schools, can cause unforeseen issues with school climate perception. Ultimately, if teachers are not satisfied and the school climate is not positive, student achievement may be negatively affected (Sherblom, Marshall, & Sherblom, 2006). Reading and math teachers may be more prone to have negative perceptions than their colleagues due to increased testing in these areas. Also, special education teachers may experience additional student achievement barriers that may not exist with regular education students. Schools and school districts may vary in how they acknowledge and support these differences.

Problem Statement

The perceptions of school climate of public middle school teachers and staff members may have a profound effect on student achievement. More specifically, student achievement may be positively affected by teachers' and staff members' positive versus negative perceptions of school climate. Additionally, special education teachers and other teacher sub-groups such as reading and math, may be more prone to having negative perceptions and negative effects than their colleagues in non-standardized tested content areas. Demographics such as grade level, age, gender, experience and other factors may affect overall positive or negative perceptions of climate.

Explanation of Problem

School climate perceived by teachers may be associated with positive or negative outcomes within a school system or school building (Berkowitz, Moore, & Astor, 2016). Not only are teachers a major part of the overall school climate, but also all the other staff members are influential in how a school's climate may be perceived as positive or negative. Discovering if there is a relationship between teachers' and staff members' perceptions of school climate and the achievement level of students within an achieving school is critical in understanding the impact of perceived school climate on achievement. Positive perceptions of school climate may be a crucial component of school performance.

Public school teachers in the U.S. are in the midst of several mandated changes in United States public schools, many of which are quite extensive and profound. For example, Arkansas Public Schools are in the midst of implementing the Science of Reading Professional Development Initiative. The Reading Initiative for Student Excellence (i.e., R.I.S.E) requires that teachers and administrators in Arkansas are trained in the science of reading (Arkansas Department of Education, 2020). These changes, along with any other mandates, may affect school climate. Understanding teachers' and other staff members' perceptions of school climate could increase the overall effectiveness of school buildings and allow for a more efficient and effective transition during the major changes being implemented. Often, the problem is not in the amount or types of changes, but in the approach and implementation of the changes. For example, top-down mandates often show little regard for the impact these changes may have on teachers and other school staff (Ramberg, 2014). With such little regard for the teachers' perceptions, school climate can quickly become negative and detrimentally affect the system

including having major consequences on student achievement (Berkowitz, Moore, Aster, & Benbenishty, 2016).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this mixed methods case study is to understand the relationship between teachers' and other staff members' perceptions of school climate and student achievement in one Arkansas public middle school that has been deemed as an achieving school. The study will also investigate any differences in perception of school climate among various teacher/faculty sub-groups, as well as various demographic attributes (e.g., age, gender, background, grade level, etc.) and how these differ within a school that is considered achieving.

Research Questions

Main Research Question

1. What perceptions of school climate exist within a school with high student achievement?
2. How do different teacher and staff member groups perceive school climate within a school with high student achievement?

Sub-Questions

- 1) Do selected demographic factors effect teacher perceptions of school climate?
- 2) Do differences exist in how sub-groups of teachers and staff members within the same school perceive climate?

Overview of Information Needed

Student Achievement Information

For the purpose of answering the research questions, student achievement data were derived from literacy and math standardized test scores from the statewide ACT Aspire Assessment. The ACT Aspire also helps the state to track student growth in reading and math. For the purpose of this study, data were collected from a middle school that had been deemed as achieving by the Arkansas Department of Education with a letter grade of A. The ADE releases school report cards with the letter grades indicating achievement levels. The letter grades are A, B, C, D, and F. This grade is subject to change from year to year and test session to test session, but the most current was reported and used in analyses.

Contextual Information

It is necessary to understand the context of the school where participants are working for the purpose of studying how teachers perceive climate. Contextual information is “information that describes the culture and environment of the setting” and the climatic setting is a major variable of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 105). Understanding the context of the school environment requires a review of several aspects of the participants’ school, including a description of the organization’s history, the vision of the school, the objectives, operating procedures, and possibly other valuable information. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) state that information on leaders, organizational structure, roles, rules, procedures, and staff (support) should also be incorporated in the contextual component. Gaining a better understanding of the contextual factors of a school can assist in the discovery of how mandated changes (e.g., Science of Reading, Teacher Evaluations, etc.), and other factors such as leadership, organizational

structure, changes in vision and mission, and objectives affect teachers' perceptions of school climate. The researcher analyzed documents and cross referenced this information with participants' self-reported responses in questionnaires and interviews. The researcher used personal observations for reporting examples of positive and negative climatic indices. This aspect of the study assisted in creating a contextual picture of what the school does to promote climate. This personal account provides specific examples of climate related indices so that a clearer context of the school climate is understood.

Demographic Information

Another critical contextual component of this study lies in the need to gather demographic information on participants. To collect the necessary data to assist in answering the research question, purposive sampling was used by collecting information from middle school teachers and staff members in one achieving middle school. Demographic information collected included years' experience, gender, grade level, content area, and years taught at current and previous schools. Polkinghorne (2005) stated that "participants can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation" (p. 139). To achieve the appropriate data analysis, demographics were used to categorically group participants based on years of experience, teacher content area, gender, and other areas. These attributes served the purpose of identifying and categorizing participant teachers. For example, a teacher with 0-2 years of experience was considered a novice teacher and more than 10 years was considered a veteran teacher.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) discuss the use of demographics to better understand individuals' perceptions, including factors such as where the participants are from, their history, background, age, and so forth. Collecting information on content areas taught and other teacher

demographical data was crucial to answering the research question of whether or not teacher and staff subgroup perceptions of climate within an achieving school differ among groups. For example, if reading and math teachers all have high regard on the climate perceptions, then there may be a relationship between climate perception and achievement. In other words, if the teachers of subject areas that are being assessed in high stakes tests, such as reading and math, are happy and positive then the test scores may reflect this perception by being higher.

Perceptual Information

For this study, data were collected using a questionnaire about teachers' and administrators' perception of school climate. Every teacher and staff member were asked to complete the Organizational Climate Description for Middle Schools (OCDQ-RM) by Hoy and Sabo (1998). Additional interviews and follow up questions were used to gain a deeper understanding of the specific faculty and staff perceptions. One member from the following teacher subgroups: 6th grade reading and 7th grade reading, 6th grade math and 7th grade math, and 6th grade special education and 7th grade special education, were asked to be interviewed. The subgroups included reading teachers, math teachers, special education teachers, elective teachers (e.g., PE, art, and music), and specialized certified staff members (e.g., instructional facilitators and librarians), as well as demographical sub-groups. Most qualitative research employs an interview format to gather perceptual information from individual participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, Garton & Copland, 2010, and Nunkoosing, 2005); however, since this was a mixed methods case study, interviews were used to provide a broader understanding of each teacher or staff member in this study. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of teachers' and staff perceptions of school climate, how school climate impacts achievement, and how the perceptions of school climate differ among sub-groups.

Research Approach

The design of this study was a pragmatic mixed-methods approach. Data used to answer the research questions were gathered using a questionnaire that contained demographic and school-climate questions from the OCDQ-RM and interviews to gather qualitative data. Student achievement data was obtained from the Arkansas Department of Education grading system. The research design of the study stemmed from the desire to examine the perceived school climate of multiple middle level teachers (i.e., 6th and 7th grade teachers), as well as other staff members from an achieving school. The site where data were collected was one middle school in Northwest Arkansas that has been denoted as an achieving school by the Department of Education rating system (i.e., 6th and 7th grade school within one school district). Data were collected using the OCDQ-RM climate surveys and interviews of a subset of teachers and staff were distributed through faculty email to the teachers and staff. Due to location and realistic abilities to conduct the research, the site was within the school that the researcher is employed.

Study participants consisted of all teachers, support staff, and administrators in the selected middle school. Demographic characteristics were collected to help determine the relationship between various characteristics and perceived school climate and how this impacted achievement. One participant teacher from specific teacher subgroups was selected to participate in a semi-structured interview session, to collect qualitative information. A group average for each participant sub-group was calculated and then compared and described. Demographical categories, such as years at current school, areas taught, special education versus regular education teachers, and others were created and compared.

What Is Hopefully Learned?

The climate of a school may affect the ability to teach and facilitate high student achievement. Discovering the differences between faculty and staff members' perceptions of school climate within the same school should facilitate the understanding of how teacher perceptions impact student achievement. If specific relationships and factors can be determined to foster a more positive school climate, then that could result in better student achievement.

Who Will Be Informed and Affected?

All stakeholders involved in the school would be informed by the data collected in this study. For teachers and staff, there would be a potential for more job satisfaction. Students would potentially benefit from a better learning environment and higher achievement. School leaders would have a powerful source of information to better understand teacher perceptions of climate and make better informed decisions so that schools could become more positive learning environments. The overall community would also benefit by having an awareness of the school district climate as well as how student achievement is affected by either a positive or negative climate.

Subjectivity Statement

Since being a past teacher of special education, as well as a school building level administrator, the researcher has had experience within several school and district level climates. Some experiences were perceived as more negative and some as more positive in personal job satisfactions. As a researcher, it is of personal interest to learn more about these phenomena. Positive school climates are important to all teachers. Without positive school climate, teacher

workplace attributes begin to decline and overall school effectiveness may also diminish (Berkowitz, et al., 2016).

Relationship to Participants

The researcher's relationship with participants of this study varies in degree, from potentially past or future co-workers to having no future, past or present knowledge of the individuals. Any future or past relationships did not cause any issues in the study, other than personal beliefs and conceptual frameworks being potentially apparent during interpretation of methodological components. Any subjectivity was fully disclosed and all efforts were made to eliminate any potential impact.

Informed Consent

Following the University of Arkansas IRB approval, informed consent was provided to all participants of this study. This consent provided information so that participants understood the scope of the study, what their experience in the study would be, how their confidentiality would be protected, how the information would be stored, and how this information would be used.

Risks and Benefits

The participants had full disclosure as to the risk and benefits of this study. The potential benefit included the participant's involvement in contributing to the field of education. The participant's data may be used to influence educational leaders to consider teachers' perceptions of school climate during change processes and implementation of mandates. The participant's risks may include others possibly knowing about their participation; however, their identity was

completely protected under the use of an alias code. There is no financial obligation to the participant or the researcher.

Methodological Considerations

When designing the methodologies of this study, the participants' identities were protected along with the school and school district they were employed. All potential identifying information was considered and accounted for. As researchers, the duty to do no harm is highly expected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Participant's information was highly protected to prevent any negative outcomes that could occur due to their involvement.

Limitations to Consider

Within this study design, some limitations regarding data collection and research design do exist. One limitation was the time at which data were collected from the participants. Specific times of the school year may be more or less stressful, therefore, teacher perceptions about school climate may be skewed in a more positive or negative manner, depending on the time of year and other factors. The teachers who chose to participate may also impact the data being collected in that some teachers may choose to participate because they have a positive or negative perception of the school's climate. For example, if all teachers who perceive the climate as positive choose to participate, the data may be skewed. The researcher sought participation from 100% of the teachers and staff within one middle school, yet there was a 79% participation rate. Another possible limitation is that only six subjects were interviewed.

Definition of Terms

Climate.

Climate is more often driven by the behaviors of individuals and collective members of the organization. It comes from a psychological perspective. In other words, it can be defined by how the thoughts and feelings of individuals and groups of individuals lead to their actions.

Furthermore, according to McNeal, Prater, and Busch (2009):

Climate is more descriptive and less symbolic, and may be seen as the heart and soul of a school as well as the essence that draws teachers and students to love the school and want to be a part of it. (p. 75)

Achievement.

Achievement can be defined by what someone has learned; academic achievement refers to what has been learned in academic areas, for example math and literacy. For this study, achievement was measured using the Arkansas Department of Education's statewide school rating system. This system utilizes an A, B, C, D and F rating that is given on a report card for each public school in Arkansas. Hattie and Anderman (2013) stated the following:

Achievement is not a straightforward concept...student achievement is the basis of nearly every aspect of education...achievement can differ across subjects, in complexity (e.g., from surface to deep understanding), in forms of evidence (e.g., essays, performances, constructions), can be seen from attainment. (p. xx)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Description of Search

The literature review for this study resulted from searching the University of Arkansas libraries online data bases (EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar). The review contains information from research published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals and dissertations.

Climate of School Organizations

Climate research originated in the industrial organizational psychology discipline and noted that school processes were also studied for its relationship with student achievement. School climate research has recently become more prevalent due in part to changes made and suggested for schools. Climate affects all aspects of an organization; psychologists and other social scientists have been studying climate within organizations for many years. Schools may have some of the most diverse cultures of any organization—from the student population to the teacher population—all of which come together under the same common goal or vision of student achievement and learning. This diversity results in the definition and assessment of school climate leading to invalid or unreliable research results (Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenistay, 2017).

Multiple researchers have attempted to define school climate. Pioneers of school climate research, Halpin and Croft, maintained that climate is “the personality of the school, expressing the collective perception of teachers of school routine and thereby influencing their attitudes and behaviors” (Berkowitz et al., 2017, p. 427). Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) defined school climate as that which “refers to the quality and characters of school life...based

on patterns of people's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (p.10). Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe, and Aelterman (2008) defined school climate as "the basic assumptions, norms and values, and cultural artifacts that are shared by school members, which influence their functioning at schools" (p. 160). Roby (2011) defined climate as a "shared vision, values, goals, beliefs, and faith in organization" (p. 783), and that, climate development may only occur through social interactions among those within the organization. Still another definition is that "school climate is the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between the students, teachers, and administrators" (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010, p. 271). A school's climate may be subjective or objective and is defined by its context (Zullig, Koopman, Patton, & Ubbes, 2010). Albeit there are many definitions for climate of an organization, for the purpose of this study climate is defined as the perspectives of each participant, and how they perceive the climate at their school.

The National School Climate Council (2007) reported that in schools with a positive school climate students, families, and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision. Theoretically, as an organization's diversity increases, the climate unity would decrease and a shared, unified vision and goals would be more difficult to achieve. As a result, creating a positive, unified perception of school climate may be difficult to achieve. In order to create a positive climate, all leaders and stakeholders must share and be engaged in a unified culture of learning (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). Peterson and Deal (1998) propose that a positive school climate encompasses the following traits: shared sense of purpose, collegiality, improvement driven, hard work, collaboration between all stakeholders, shared traditions, and innovative. School climate is built upon social interactions among stakeholders with an

emphasis on sharing a vision, values, goals, beliefs, and belief in the organization as a whole (Roby, 2011). It is “patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alesandro, 2013, p. 358).

Macro and micro levels of school climate.

A macro and micro level of climate does exist within a school organization. The macro level of school emphasizes the holistic and shared beliefs of all stakeholders. Thapa and colleagues (2013) suggested that all stakeholders are responsible for contributing to the operations of a school as well as the physical environment of the school. Student mobility, faculty turnover, and large class sizes have effects on macro level (i.e., building level) aspects of the school (Mitchell et al., 2010). Unlike the macro level, the micro level of school climate takes place within the classroom. Kythreotis, Pashiardis, and Kyriakides (2010) describe classroom, microlevels of climate as being more subjective and different among each classroom. Classroom disruptive behaviors have the largest effect on the micro level (i.e., the classroom level), while students’ gender, ethnicity, and age also impact climate perception at the individual level (i.e., the smallest level) (Mitchell et al., 2010).

The classroom level of climate includes the following aspects: 1) an academic emphasis, 2) an academic efficiency, 3) an academic novelty, 4) cheating behaviors among students, 5) disruptive student behaviors, and 6) success indices. Most regular education classrooms have these components in various levels; however, special education classrooms may often have more of the disruptive behaviors, and less of the success relative to these aspects of climate. Collaboration amongst leaders, teachers, students, and other stakeholders and full engagement in the culture must be present to allow for positive climates (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). School

climate perception may vary from individual to individual, yet this should be minimal and schools should share the same overall positive sense of climate norms which lead to successful student achievement.

The social ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner suggests that perceptions of school environment are influenced by numerous factors, including different teacher's perception of the environment (Guy-Evans, 2020). All teachers should share in the goals of student learning success and achievement, both of which are positive aspects of school climate; however, defining the many aspects of school climate can be very challenging.

Often, the top- down approach to climatic norms may lead some stakeholders to feel less involved in the overall make-up of the organization, as mandates have driven district and community leaders to dictate some aspects of the school climate. For example, stakeholders who are not within the classroom and most influential in student achievement outcomes may have a lesser role in the development and shared perceptions of the organizational climate. This may prompt teachers and students to develop the micro levels of climate within the classroom and organization. This could lead to negative climates and an inflated, unrealistic view of a positive climate by those in organizational leadership positions. Bolton (2011) reports that inconsistencies among principal and administrative leaders' perceptions of climate compared to teacher perceptions do exist.

Positive v. negative school climate.

Educators and stakeholders within the school organization should all be aspiring to promote a positive school climate, as the effects of positive vs. negative climates can be significant. A positive school climate is one that develops youth into having a productive,

contributive, and satisfying democratic life, and where norms, values, and expectations are shared by all stakeholders. Members of such a climate are engaged and respected, and each member is socially, emotionally, and physically safe (Thapa et al., 2013). Roby (2011) stated that a positive school climate should include the following elements: 1) an inspiring vision and challenging mission, 2) a curriculum link to the vision, 3) sufficient time to work, 4) supportive relationships, 5) trusting relationships, and 6) data-driven decision making. Other researchers have focused on more specific elements of climate. For example, Hoy (2012) described an academic emphasis, collective trust, and collective efficacy as three elements of a positive climate, but later combined these elements into one definition termed ‘academic optimism.’ Promotion of success and optimism toward a unified vision must be shared from top to bottom among all stakeholders, and not just dictated from the leaders to the teachers and so on. “Faculties who are enthusiastic and actively promote student achievement present principals with a much more positive culture than faculties that are apathetic and set low standards” (Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2007).

Positive school climate influences teacher, student, and administrator job satisfaction in a positive manner. Most teachers are satisfied with the job of teaching (e.g., work tasks, professional growth, etc.), however, they are dissatisfied with aspects related to the performance of the teaching job (e.g., working conditions, interpersonal relationships, salary, etc.), which are often times outside of their scope of influence (Butt, Lance, Fielding, Gunter, Rayner, & Thomas, 2005; Crossman, & Harris, 2006). With a positive school climate, teachers and students will enhance the goals of the organization (i.e., student achievement and overall learning will increase). However, with a negative school climate, the risk of little production and effort is more likely the outcome. Engels et al. (2008) described some commonalities within positive

school climates: “1) a shared sense of purpose and values, 2) norms of continuous learning and improvement, 3) collaborative collegial relationships and opportunities for collective problem solving and sharing experiences” (p. 161). Trust has been found to be a significant factor in the development of a positive school climate. Hoy (2012) found that trust had five characteristics: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness—concluding that for trust to be an effective component of climate—all individuals involved must make themselves vulnerable to trusting. Trust must be developed from top down in that district and organizational leader perspectives are open, honest, and welcome communication among teachers, leaders, and students.

One commonly used method of promoting positive school climate involves a shared sense of leadership among stakeholders. Leaders should promote teacher leadership roles under a shared and unified vision. Shead (2010) used the Job Descriptive Index to have teachers rate school leaders on seven climatic factors: professional development, empowerment, student supportiveness, work pressure, resource adequacy, innovation, and mission consensus. According to Shead (2010), teacher empowerment had the most significant effect on teacher job satisfaction and promotion of positive school climate. This viewpoint is not universally shared. Other researchers argued that empowering teachers with leadership roles and distributive leadership methods may actually create a negative school climate in some schools. Engel (2009) believed that distributive leadership and teacher empowerment through leadership roles may be ineffective due to the lack of authority the teacher leaders are granted. Aspects of team leadership and teacher empowerment through leadership roles could create role confusion within the school climate, and the perceptions of leadership may tend to be top down oriented regardless of the measures taken to distribute leadership and empowerment. In other words, distributive

leadership may not result in negative climate but limited authority with distributive leadership may.

Positive climate attributes.

“Climate is powerful and influences all that goes on in schools” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28). Peterson and Deal (1998) and Roby (2011) also listed several norms to look for in a positive school climate:

- Shared sense of purpose
- Collegiality
- Improvement goals
- Hard work mentality
- Rituals and Traditions
- Celebratory mentality and practices
- Innovative
- Community and parental commitment and involvement
- Inspiring vision and learning is reflective of vision
- Challenging mission teaching is reflective of mission
- Time is sufficient enough to complete work
- Non-threatening leadership practices
- Data-driven decision making

Negative climate attributes.

Peterson and Deal (1998) used the term “toxic culture” (p. 29) when referring to a school with a negative climate in place. Peterson and Deal (1998) listed the following attributes for a negative school climate:

- Fragmented staff
- Lacking collaboration
- Agenda and adult driven practices (i.e., not student center driven goals)
- Negative values
- A sense of hopelessness

Teacher Perceptions of Climate

Positive perceptions vs. negative perceptions.

A teacher’s perception about school culture, climate, job satisfaction, and the like are all powerful forces in all aspects of school systematic organizations. Bear and colleagues (2012) found that teachers’ perceptions of school climate are related to teacher job satisfaction, teacher burnout and retention rates, perceptions of work conditions, and to teacher implementation of new curricula and academic interventions. Teachers’ perceptions are a product of the school climate for which they are embedded, thus teachers from the same school will likely have similar perceptions relative to other schools (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). If a teacher has a positive perception of the school, research shows student achievement and other key factors will also be positive; conversely, if the perception is negative—the opposite is often the result. Teachers are socially driven and possess a deep connection to teaching. Ras (2012) reported that teachers’ intrinsic motives are a love for teaching, a sense of social justice (e.g., democracy, fairness,

equality, etc.), and a sense of calling to the profession (i.e., making a difference mentality).

Therefore, any negative perceptions are a part of who they are in both climate and norms (Ras, 2012). When teachers perceive climate as positive it can lead to an increasing commitment toward the profession. On the other hand, if the perceptions are negative an increased disillusionment with the profession may occur (Griffin, Kilgore, Winn, & Otis-Wilburn, 2008).

School Climate and Job Satisfaction

School climate plays a significant role in teacher job satisfaction (Taylor, & Tashakkori, 1995) and teacher job satisfaction and commitment to work are more directly related to student outcomes (Dutta, & Sahney, 2015). Dutta and Sahney further claim:

Job satisfaction, the most focal job attitude studied in the work and organizational psychology literature refers to the favorable or unfavorable feelings that individuals have toward their work or work environment, resulting from an evaluation of their job or job experiences. (p. 944)

Teacher perception of job satisfaction are maintained by a variety of aspects, for example, the relationships between principals and teachers, salaries, working conditions, professional growth, recognition, work itself, and more (Ostroff, 1992). Several school climate indices are related to teachers' and other school staffs' job satisfaction. Collie et al. (2012) stated that "teachers who experience lower perceived stress and greater perceived teaching efficacy and job satisfaction encourage greater achievement among their students" (p. 1189). Teachers' stress is an indication of job satisfaction and perception of positive or negative school climate. Several researchers have indicated students' behaviors and discipline and workload as heavy stressors on teachers (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

Climate as a Component of Culture

Collie et al. (2012) referred to school climate as the “esprit de corps, the heart and soul, and the atmosphere, culture, resources, and social networks of a school” (p. 1190). Researchers have described cultural aspects of an organization using the term climate (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Climate is defined as the behaviors, beliefs, and characteristics, of a particular social, ethnic, or age group. For the purpose of this study, climate and culture could be used synonymously in many ways, as the definitions and interactions between the operational definitions of these terms are closely related. Robinson (2010) measured climate of schools using four types: open climate, engaged climate, disengaged climate, and closed climate. All four types could be seen as affecting climate and culture in a negative or positive manner. In order to better understand climate of a school, Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) surveyed the following aspects of climate within schools: communication, innovations, advocacy, decision making, evaluation, and attitudes toward staff development.

Teacher Sub-Groups and Climate

Some of the most vulnerable children in schools today are the students with disabilities and exceptional students. Therefore, the teachers of such students must be well trained and have the skills, willingness, and supports to effectively educate students with individualized needs. Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004) stated that the number of teachers in special education who are leaving the field is at an alarming figure, and that many who enter the field are doing so as uncertified teachers. Billingsley et al. (2004) reported that there is little research in the areas of special education teachers’ perceptions of school climate. These researchers also found that informal assistance and climatic factors were perceived by special educators as being the most effective form of support leading to better job satisfaction. This finding supports the notion that

flexibility to adapt to individual teacher needs as the needs arise, often times unpredictably, is crucial for a positive experience. Much of the focus has been on recruiting teachers to fill shortages in the areas of need, but this has been ineffective in keeping teachers.

Many teachers are young when they first begin their careers, and they often enter the field for the intrinsic motivations and rewards associated with being a teacher. However, Gold (1996) suggested that many teachers are not experiencing the internal rewards of being a teacher, which leads to disillusionment, burnout, and eventually leaving the field all together. One method to combat early teacher struggles is to have support systems in place to handle the difficulties that most beginning teachers experience. Often the novice teacher is placed in the most difficult assignment, with difficult students, difficult parents, mounds of paperwork, and a learning curve that would be difficult for anyone to succeed (Billingsley et al., 2004). Two climatic areas of support should be provided according to Gold (1996): psychological support and instructional support. In other words, beginning special education teachers need a mentor that will be flexible and focus on the personal and pedagogical aspects of being an effective teacher.

Most school systems have a form of induction and mentoring that takes place with beginning teachers. These mentoring programs are often not tailored to individual needs of each teacher, and possibly even less tailored to the needs of special education teachers. Many of the special education teachers are matched with a regular education teacher mentor, which have little knowledge or experience needed to facilitate good mentoring. Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, and Kilgore (2002) found several climatic problems associated with beginning teachers that included the following: curriculum and instructional issues, poor working conditions, unclear and ambiguous roles, source and materials being hard to locate and procure, dealing with student

behavioral issues, time issues, organizational issues, collaboration issues, stress, and instructional management issues.

Job satisfaction may be the clearest and most critical aspect of what a teacher perceives as positive or negative. If a teacher is not happy or satisfied with the job, the likelihood of him or her being effective inherently diminishes. In 2009, the U. S. Department of Education reported that teacher job satisfaction had dropped 15% to its lowest levels in 20 years. In the same document, “The National Center for Education—Profile of Teachers 2011” reported that one-third (33%) of teachers did not expect to be teaching in five years. Perrachione, Peterson, and Rosser (2008) offered this explanation:

Research on job satisfaction in the field of education has explored both the consequences (outcomes) and antecedents (influences) of teacher satisfaction. Research has examined at least three possible outcomes (retention, attrition, and absenteeism) and at least three major influences (demographic variables, job role-related characteristics, and work experiences. (p. 2)

The same researchers reported that demographic factors have been found to be positively correlated with teacher satisfaction (e.g., as age increased, satisfaction also increased). This notion makes sense from a retention vs. attrition stand point. If teachers are able to make it over the 3-5 year beginning stages with some satisfaction in the job, they will more than likely remain this way for the remaining years of their career. However, some reports have stated that approximately 50% of teachers will leave the field after their first year of teaching (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, & U. S. Department of Education, 2018).

The job of teaching is by nature a difficult one for many reasons. One such reason is the notion of role-overload or increasing pressures and demands on teachers such as additional paperwork demands and increasing non-teaching duties. Perrachione et al. (2008) reported that

role-overload was related to decreased job satisfaction and teacher attrition rate increase. The research has not differentiated between special education teachers and regular education teachers in relation to job satisfaction or role-overload—whereas, special education teachers often carry caseloads and already have an abundance of paperwork. Special education teachers often have the same teaching duties, but are also required to attend IEP meetings, meet rigorous mandates involving students with disabilities, and so on. Nevertheless, they are also being compensated at the same rate, but often have more challenging students, receive less support, and multiple other differences. Therefore, it may be fair to presume that a special education teacher may have less job satisfaction than their regular education teacher colleagues.

A thorough review of literature has demonstrated that intrinsic motivations for teachers are often times why they enter the field and remain in the field if these motivations are being met adequately. Perrachione et al. (2008) reported that there is no significant relationship between extrinsic (e.g., monetary) benefits and job satisfaction for teachers.

Leadership and Climate

Research has indicated that leadership styles may affect the overall climate and culture of organizations. Research on leadership style has been conducted for many years, across many organizations—both public and private. Leadership style in a private business is typically driven by financial gain and may exhibit a much different style than a public organization, such as a school. Schools are driven by academic achievement gains and a desire to serve society and its common good. However, the missions and styles are theoretically similar. No matter the organizational type, the style of leadership will promote a specific type of culture, either, positive and productive or negative and unproductive. Principals and building leaders are responsible for

teaching and learning behaviors and expectations (i.e., academic climate), which are in turn passed down to teachers and then to students (Zullig et al., 2010).

Leaders of schools and school districts are often given the task of implementing school reforms. Mitchel et al. (2010) claim that school climate has become a target for school improvement initiatives. This includes the manipulation of the school climate by building level leaders (i.e., principals), whereas, the goal is to foster the most productive, positive climate. “The Center of Disease Control and Prevention suggests school climate reform as a data-driven strategy that promotes healthy relationships, school connectedness, and dropout prevention” (Thapa et al., 2013, p. 257). All tasks that are associated with a building level administrators’ job duties and descriptions. Since school climate has physical and not only social aspects, the building level leader may have limitations to how much control he or she has on the climate of the physical environment. Many times, the physical aspects of climate are associated with financing, which some districts and buildings may not be able to control.

With the growing emphasis on school climate and its effects on school performance and so on, it is imperative that school leaders help foster positive school climates. Cohen et al. (2009) reported that fifteen states use aspects of school climate to evaluate leadership in schools, and that state departments and districts across the United States are using climate indices to develop future school leaders as well as assessing the effectiveness of current school administrators. This should be done in each and every school and school district to select, place, and promote building level leaders. School boards should consider selecting district level leaders using a climate scale so that top down (i.e., macro to micro levels) the school climate is similarly positive throughout all levels.

Types of Leadership Styles

An operational definition of leadership style must be formulated by using leader traits and characteristics. These characteristics stem from many different personal experiences and beliefs. Howard (2005) stated that leadership attributes include: behavior, personal characteristics, and leadership situations. This perspective looks at the individual as a whole, not just from a career perspective. In most situations, the style of a leader would be portrayed by the behavior he or she exhibits. Anderson (2010) described school leadership style as “behaviors of leader by task, relationship, and change orientation” (p. 131).

Bureaucratic, managerial, and educational leadership styles.

Research has described leadership style in various ways, while also reporting different style attributes in association with school climate. Three more common styles are bureaucratic, managerial, and educational. Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenoghe, and Aelterman (2008) described these three principal leadership styles as followed: bureaucratic style (rules and regulations-oriented leadership), manager style (people management-oriented style), and educational style (pedagogical-oriented leadership). These three styles of leadership seem reasonable and overall encompassing to most educational leaders.

Change-driven and transformational leadership style.

This change orientation component is critical in educational leadership, as curriculum and other school factors are always changing. Public school leaders, as reported by Anderson (2010), have change-driven styles of leadership 50% of the time. Another name for change-driven leadership is transformational leader. Robinson (2010) categorized leadership style into three categories: transformational, transactional, and laissez faire. The transformational leader

creates an environment where teacher resistance to change is minimized (Oreg & Berson, 2011). In two studies conducted by Scope (2006) and Lazzaro (2009), transformational leadership style was found to be a dominant trait among school principals. Many positive relationships have been reported with transformational leadership styles. Teacher retention is much higher in schools with this type of leadership style (Lazzaro, 2009). Many schools struggle with teacher retention for various reasons (e.g., lower pay, rural areas, etc.), but the notion that schools may be able to alleviate some of this attrition by hiring transformational type leaders, does give this some credibility.

Eclectic and holistic leadership styles.

Transformational leadership (i.e., change-driven leadership styles) is only one aspect of style to consider as a style that may positively affect culture and climate in a school. Goldring, Huff, May, and Camburn (2007) list three leadership styles: eclectic, instructional, and student-relations oriented. Of these three styles, eclectic leaders were found in schools with higher student achievement; whereas, the two comparison styles were found more often in lower achieving schools (Goldring et al., 2007). According to those findings, school and district leaders who are dominated by one style of leadership, and not the eclectic, may be less effective in promoting a culture and climate associated with high student achievement.

Research conducted on school leadership and leadership styles has demonstrated a relationship in how the teachers perceive culture and climate. A study by Howard (2005) categorized leadership style based on four attributes: 1) Fact-based (Type A), 2) Creativity-based (Type B), 3) Feelings-based (Type C), and 4) Control/power-based (Type D). Each of these descriptions were synonymously related to other styles previously mentioned. For instance, the Type B would be associated with a transformational leader, as with change process there is a

need to have creativity. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) and supplemental mandates have made change in schools inevitable. Accountability measures related to student achievement have become increasingly rigorous for teachers and leaders of public schools, and quite possibly special education teachers may have the most change in which to adapt.

Foregoing the paperwork associated with IEPs and students with disabilities, holding all students to Core standards is increasingly demanding on special education teachers. In the past special education teachers were able to use IEP goals to demonstrate achievement and so on, but now the students with disability must also take the high stakes standardized tests—and schools often struggle with this sub-population. Leaders who have an eclectic, multifaceted approach to change and leadership will be more successful with all student achievement goals, including the special education sub-population (Howard, 2005). Holistic leaders are most effective by employing a wide array of styles based on situation and need, but according to Howard (2005) only 3% of all school leaders are able to employ this approach.

Additional Characteristics Affecting Climate

Effectiveness and flexibility characteristics.

The effectiveness and flexibility of school leaders strongly influence the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning (i.e., student achievement). Some may believe flexible traits could have positive effects on schools. On the other hand, flexibility may be perceived as being too indecisive and incompetent, which would more often have negative effects on school culture and climate, but more importantly teaching and learning may suffer. Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) measured flexibility and effectiveness of leaders. Within their findings, effectiveness was a product of leadership and specific styles can either hinder or produce effectiveness within student achievement. Kelley et al. (2005) also reported that flexibility was a

personality trait that may affect decision making –yet no other—possibly more important aspects of leadership.

Student Achievement and Climate

School climate has been found to have significant impacts on student achievement. Wang, Haertal, and Walberg (1997) stated that school culture and climate had some of the most significant impacts on student achievement. Hoy and Hannum (1997) found that the most important aspect of school climate that affected student achievement was one that focused on academics (i.e., academic emphasis, teacher commitment, and resource/supplies availability), even after socioeconomics was controlled.

Each grade level has student achievement standards or thresholds for achievement based on grade level norms. This means that all students within a grade are tested on specific academic standards and the testing results are then normed or placed on a standardized curve. Students who fall within the standards are considered proficient or achieving, whereas those who fall further below the norm are considered below grade level or non-achieving. This grade level mean does not disregard the special needs students, who are on the Individualized Education Plan. These students are also part of the normative analysis and expected to meet grade level standards as well. Districts across the United States struggle to meet the standard goals with this sub-group of students with disabilities. Feng and Sass (2013) reported that 75% of the students are below grade level averages on standardized tests. In Arkansas state public schools, the ESEA accountability report for 2016-2017 reported that only 14% of the students with disabilities subgroup scored proficient or better on grade level standards in literacy (arkansased.org, 2018). Yet, there are very few studies that look at the special education

programs and the relationship between them and achievement for students with disabilities (Feng & Sass, 2013).

For the purpose of this research, school climate was analyzed at a school that was considered achieving by state standards. The Arkansas Department of Education (2019) enacted the Arkansas Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on January 16, 2018. Act 744 of 2017 aligned the state accountability systems with the federal requirements and permitted the use of the ESSA School Index Score as the universal score for accountability. The schools are then given a letter grade of A, B, C, D, and F depending on several achievement indices. The schools with an A letter grade are considered the highest achieving schools within the state.

School Climate and Students

Many studies have indicated a link between school climate and multiple outcomes for students, teachers, and schools (Bear et al., 2012). School climate has been shown to affect student achievement (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Johnson, & Steven, 2006; and Benerjee, Stearns, Moller, & Mickelson, 2017). All schools share in one thing for certain and this is the goal of increased or high student achievement for all students. Previously, throughout this review of literature there has been a good deal of it focusing on school climate, culture, and job satisfaction, which for the sake of this research could be referred to as inputs of a school. The outputs would be the achievement of students. Inherently, as climate increases, so would the student achievement. Zullig et al. (2010) reported that school climate can affect students' social-environmental behaviors, as well as their learning, therefore, addressing school climate should lead to positive outcomes. Thapa et al. (2013) reported that school climate affects middle school students' feeling of esteem and self-worth, as well as other areas of mental health, and that

having a positive school climate may offset socioeconomic effects on academic achievement, motivate learning, lessen behavior issues, lower absenteeism, and lower suspension rates.

Various Domains of School Climate

Most researchers agree that there are several domains and dimensions associated with school climate. Some researchers suggest a few dimensions, and others suggest more. Thapa et al. (2013) listed 5 domains of school climate as follows: 1) safety (e.g. rules, norms, and physical, social, and emotional safety), 2) relationships (e.g. respect for diversity and school connectedness and engagement, social support, leadership, and students' race/ethnicity), 3) teaching and learning (e.g. social-emotional, ethical and civic learning, academic learning support, and support for professional relationships), 4) institutional environment (e.g. physical surroundings, resources, and supplies), and 5) school improvement process (e.g. how they go about change). Bear, Yang, Pell, and Gaskins (2012) described 7 measures of school climate as follows: 1) teacher-student relations, 2) student-student relations, 3) teacher-home communications, 4) respect for diversity, 5) school safety, 6) fairness of rules, and 7) clarity of expectations. Zullig et al. (2010) listed five of the more common school climate domains as: 1) order, safety, and discipline, 2) academic outcomes, 3) social relationships, 4) school facilities, and 5) school connectedness. Some researchers have narrowed down the domains to four overarching, which are as follows: 1) safety, 2) relationships within the organization, 3) physical environment, and 4) shared vision by all (Zullig et al., 2010; Wang & Degol, 2016). In general, most climate descriptions have two main themes: social aspects and physical aspects within and of the school.

Wang and Degol (2016) stated that a better school climate would make for better achievement, lessen the number of student dropouts, and decrease overall problem behaviors.

These researchers also offered 4 domains and 13 dimensions as well as specific school examples to illustrate a successful school climate (see below figure 1 replication, Wang & Degol, 2016, p. 318):

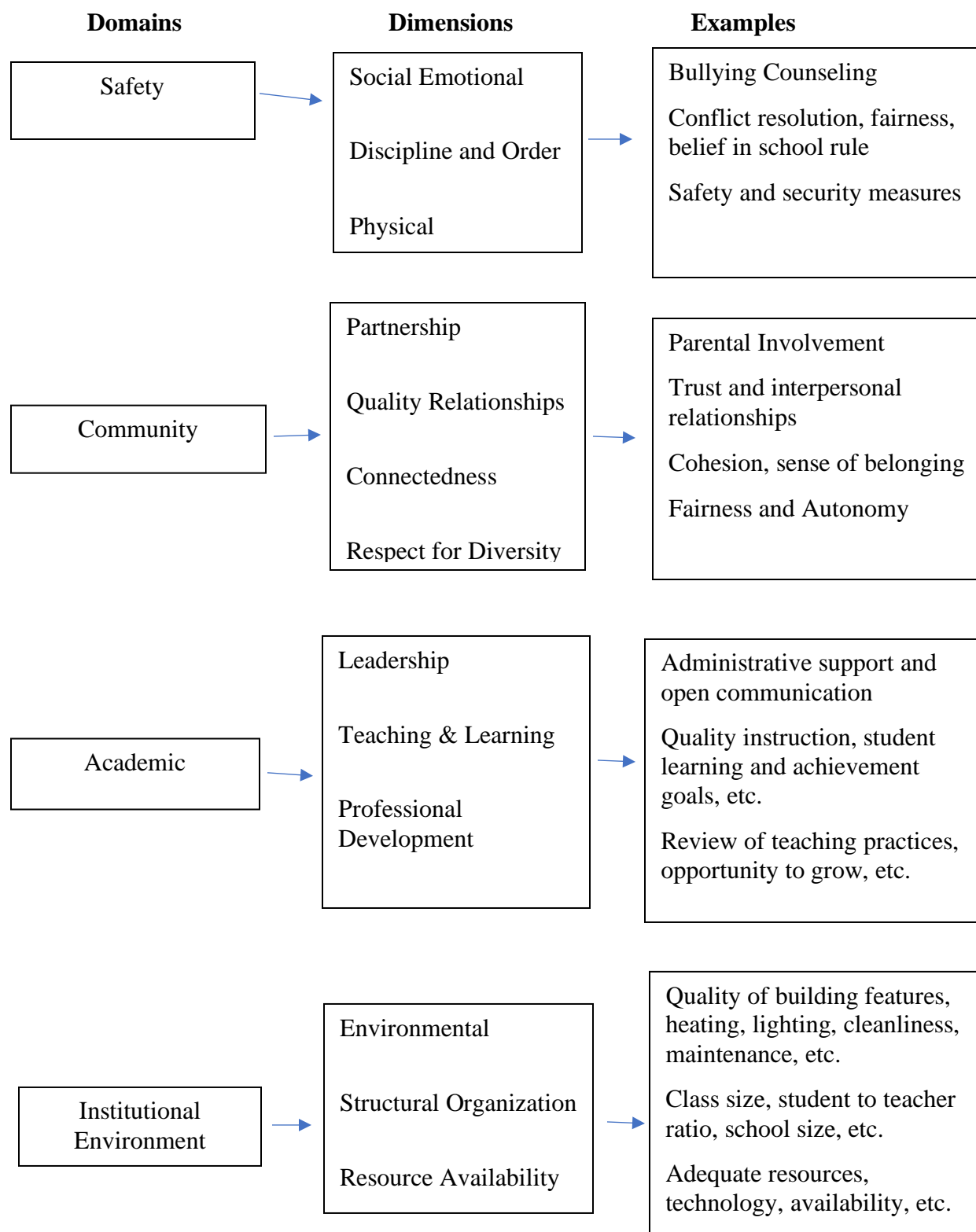


Fig. 1: School Climate 4 Domains, 13 dimensions and example characteristics (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain better understanding of teachers' and teacher sub-groups' perceptions of school climate and its relationship to student achievement in literacy and math using a mixed methods case study research design. More specifically, an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used in which a survey was first administered and then followed up by interviews to further flush out the findings to more deeply explain the survey results. Teachers and staff members from one middle school in a larger Northwest Arkansas School District were asked to participate. The teachers and staff participants were grouped in several different ways. Primary groupings consisted of position types within the school (i.e., reading, math, etc. teachers). Teacher sub-groups based on various demographical data, such as special education vs. regular education teachers. Other grouping examples include the following: subject area taught (e.g., math or reading), years' teaching experience, gender, grade level taught, years at current school, and number of different schools worked.

After the survey was completed by teachers and staff, the researcher grouped all participants based on positive or negative perceptions for each question. For example, teachers who responded to question 1 with a negative score (Likert of 1 or 2) were grouped together, and those who were positive responders (Likert of 3 or 4) were grouped together. These groups were analyzed based on the variances in other factors being studied (i.e., positive or negative perceptions of climate, teacher sub-groups, years of teaching experience, gender, and other aforementioned variables).

After the initial survey data were collected and sorted for groupings, participants were then selected from teacher sub-groups (e.g., special education, reading and math) to participate in a face-to-face interview. Six total teachers were interviewed, including: two reading (English language arts), one from 6th and 7th grades, two math teachers, one from 6th and 7th grades, two special education teachers, one from 6th and 7th grades. This qualitative method allowed for more in-depth data collection and analysis, while also allowing for better understanding of the research questions and possible predictive conclusions about the relationships.

Documents were reviewed to provide a more detailed account of climatic indices of the school, more specifically related to student achievement data. For example, the school's statewide grade on the grading system was found on the Arkansas Department of Education website. A contextual description was provided by the researcher that described specific examples of climatic features of the school.

Sample

Participants for the proposed study consisted of teachers and staff members from one middle school that was determined to be achieving by the Arkansas Department of Education from one school district in Northwest Arkansas. The district was one of the larger districts in the state, which ensured the sample size would be sufficient and the data obtained would be richer in content and potential variability. Having a larger school district helped ensure that participants represented a varied demographical background (e.g., age of teacher, experience, etc.). Math, English, and special education teachers were asked to provide more information through a semi-structured interview. For example, a participant who teaches special education reading and a participant who teaches regular education reading were selected to make comparisons between

the two. They were intentionally selected to further enrich the data collected through more intimate questioning and interviewing.

The sample was comprised of teachers and staff from a 6th and 7th grade level public school in an Arkansas school district. The researcher used the faculty email list to recruit participants for the study. Emails were distributed explaining the purpose of the study and provided informed consent. The email list included 97 individuals, however 4 of them were either district employees, or were not full-time employees at the school leaving a total of 93 potential subjects. A total of 67 of the 93 individuals signed and returned the informed consent, and of this total, 53 recipients completed and returned the questionnaire resulting in a return rate of 79%.

Contextual Information

To better understand the relationship between perceived school climate and achievement it was important to have an overview of the contextual information of the school. The school used in this study was one in which the researcher is employed as a teacher. Considered a high achieving school by the Arkansas Department of Education, the school was given the letter grade of A in the state's rating system. It is a middle level school that is comprised of 6th and 7th grades. The Arkansas Department of Education (2020) reported the following data for this school from 2018-2019:

- total enrollment was 715 students,
- 77% students on free and reduced lunch,
- average teacher experience was 14 years,
- percentage of students in special education was 11%,

- 28% of students were classified as ESL,
- school staff included 62 classroom teachers, 3 administrators, 2 counselors, 3 office staff, 2 media specialists, 3 instructional facilitators, 1 speech pathologist, 2 classified office personnel, 1 school nurse, and 1 custodian.

The school is comprised of five 6th grade teams and three 7th grade teams, which is common for the middle school philosophy. Each team has teachers who are core subject area teachers, while the elective teachers are shared among all students and grade levels.

Data Collection Methods

Document review.

To gain a better understanding of the school and the school district in the study, a review of documents—both internal and external—was conducted. The documents for school performance and demographics were found on the Arkansas Department of Education website and the district website. In a qualitative study the context and environment should be analyzed from multiple document types (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Documents provided information related to school climate such as job satisfaction (e.g., attrition rate and absenteeism), and organizational structural components (e.g., leadership roles within teacher groups). Review of the documents provided student achievement data as from standardized testing scores for each student and as a school wide indicator. Arkansas Department of Education documents are indicative of whether or not the school is achieving standards on grade level.

Quantitative data.

Demographic data were collected in the following areas: 1) job title, 2) subject area taught, 3) grade level taught, 4) years at current school, 5) number of schools worked, 6) total

years' teaching or in current job, and 7) gender. The quantitative climate survey data were collected through The Organizational Climate Description for Middle Schools (OCDQ-RM) designed by Hoy (2019). The questions were derived from the four main domains of climate (i.e., community, institutional environment, safety, and academics). A Likert scale rating of 1-4 was used for most of the questions, so that the data could be quantified and groups of positive and negative responses could be calculated. Demographic data were used in the quantitative analyses. The demographics were used to compare different group means on various factors (e.g., gender: male group v. female group).

Quantitative instrument.

The survey instrument used for collecting school climate data was created by Hoy & Sabo (1998) (see Appendix A for complete questionnaire). The OCDQ-RM is comprised of 50 questions over the following dimensions (i.e., subtest areas): 1) Supportive principal behavior, 2) Directive principal behavior, 3) Restrictive principal behavior, 4) Collegial teacher behavior, 5) Committed teacher behavior, and 6) Disengaged teacher behavior. The instrument's internal reliability scores for each subtest are: Supportive (.96), Directive (.88), Restrictive (.89), Collegial (.90), Committed (.93), and Disengaged (.87). The questionnaire has construct validity in measuring organizational climate as measured through a factor analysis.

Quantitative data analyses.

Each of the participants' answers to questions on the OCDQ-RM questionnaire were analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics. Staff type (e.g., teacher sub-groups), demographical data, and positive versus negative perceptions of climate were statistically described using measures of central tendency and standard deviations. The teachers' responses

to questions related to school climate and culture allowed the researcher to group into positive or negative perceptions on each individual survey question. Based on climate perception, the researcher believed there would be no significant differences in the groups of teachers and staff members (e.g., reading teachers, etc.) relative to all other factors (e.g., demographics).

For the purpose of addressing the research question of whether or not there was a difference between groups in how climate was perceived, the researcher performed a series of independent, two-sample t-tests. The groupings were made up of various teacher and staff groups (e.g., 7th grade and 6th grade teachers, special education teachers and regular education teachers, ELA and math teachers, and other groupings). The groups were compared to the responses to the climate survey to see if there was a significant difference in how the groups perceived the climate of the school. The researcher believed that there would be no significant differences in how the groups perceived the climate of the school. The OCDQ-RM climate questionnaire scores were the dependent variable, whereas the various groups were the independent variables.

Interviews.

After the initial survey data were collected and analyzed, teachers were subjectively selected based on the subject area taught and grade level taught. The teachers who were asked to participate in the interviews were English language arts, math, and special education teachers of math and reading. These teachers are most critical in the determination of whether or not the school is classified as achieving, since the statewide test focuses on reading and math proficiency. The interviews were used to gather data on specific teachers' and staff members' perceptions of climate. For example, a special education teacher was interviewed to compare his/her perceptions to that of the regular education teacher of the same subject matter. The

interview was designed as an open-ended questionnaire so that the participants would provide the most honest responses (Cresswell, 2013). For validity reasons, interviews were conducted in the same manner with each participant, and each participant was given multiple opportunities to report information in an open-ended manner (Maxwell, 2013). Much time was spent designing the interview protocols, and flexibility was needed to ensure crucial information was not overlooked (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Observations.

A critical component of the research was the researcher was embedded in the school environment, allowing for a descriptive account of the school climate domains being studied. These observations were used to further validate the true nature of the school climate. Specific climate domains, such as: safety, academic, community, and institutional environment, were observed and described with examples and perceptions of the researcher. The researcher used the observations to build a contextual picture of the school in relation to climatic features and examples.

Data Analysis Overview

Data Generation

The teachers and staff members were grouped into sub-groups based on demographics. The initial OCDQ-RM questionnaire provided an indication of school climate from all staff members' perspectives. A comparison of these groups was completed to determine if there were groups with more positive or negative perceptions relative to the other groups. Results from the survey were used to categorize participants into the groups based on demographics and positive or negative responses to questions. Six total participants were then asked to participate in a

semi-structured interview to gather more intimate data. A review of the current school and district tasks, demands, job duties, decision making structures, and other policy related aspects assisted in the understanding of the phenomena being studied. Once these data were collected through interviews, surveys, and document reviews, a coding process was used to analyze and organize the data.

Data Organization

After these data had been collected through interviews, observations, document reviews, and surveys, it was then organized for analysis. In organizing the data for analysis, significant statements, meaning units, and overall “essence” descriptions allowed the researcher to find themes within the data that enabled answering the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). While initially analyzing the data, the researcher was cognizant of the research questions, but also allowed for unguided understandings of what the participants were reporting. This approach allowed flexibility and a focus on the phenomenon being studied (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The initial organization phase categorized repetitious data. Big ideas were sought, which allowed for a framework to be organized (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Once the themes and categories emerged into big ideas, tables were used to track and organize them. The initial categories were used to guide the coding procedures, which were used to further organize the data so that it could be analyzed further.

Data Analysis

Teacher and staff perceptual data of climate was gathered and analyzed so that teachers could be grouped into two groups (positive vs. negative) on each survey question and interview

protocol. The teachers provided these data through the survey question responses, demographical responses, and/or the interview responses. For this study, the survey data were analyzed through an open coding format. A Likert scale from 1 to 4 was used as dictated by the OCDQ-RM (Hoy, 1998), which was already numerically coded based on each teacher's response to the questions. A numeric code was used for demographic responses for the quantitative analyses. These data collected, and then coded for commonalities were used to describe the phenomena contributing to teacher perception of school climate. The same process was used to code and analyze the interviews. The analysis was viewed through a positive versus negative viewpoints approach. During the interviews of participants, commonalities were pooled together to form positive or negative response codes.

After data were collected from the participants and other sources, ethical considerations were given during the analyses, interpretation, and conclusion phases of the study. To ensure that these data were analyzed in a credible and dependable manner (i.e., reliable and valid); the analysis included an inter-rater and peer debriefing component. This allowed the researcher to validate the coding and the initial data analysis, and allowed the opportunity to review the analysis and data again from other perspectives (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Specific Data Analyses

General descriptive statistics were used to create groups and sub-groups of teachers and school staff. A series of independent t-tests was conducted to compare the groups and sub-groups responses to the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. Each dimension on the climate survey was analyzed based on other factors such as demographical differences (e.g., gender, grade level taught, etc.). Each dimension of the OCDQ-RM had a series of questions that aligned to them.

Dimensions included:

- Supportive principal behavior,
- Directive principal behavior,
- Restrictive principal behavior,
- Collegial teacher behavior,
- Committed teacher behavior,
- Disengaged teacher behavior,
- Principal Openness,
- Teacher Openness

For example, question 1 responses on the survey had a positive (3 or 4) or a negative (1 or 2) score, and when the subgroups were formed the means of the groups were used to compare group perceptions on each dimension. An example of group comparisons is reading teachers in special education could report negatively on questions associated with committed behavior versus the general education counterpart may report positively on the same questions.

Explanation of sample spreadsheet.

Column one has the individual teachers, staff member, or administrator from the same middle school. The second column was coded based on the sub-group (i.e., teacher position, administrator position, or staff type). The third column was gender and coded a 1 for males and 2 for females. The fourth column was coded for teacher type or subject area taught. The fifth column was coded for years' experience. All demographics were coded in a spreadsheet. The remaining columns were the Likert responses to each question. Questions with responses of 1 or 2 were considered negative perceptions of climate, whereas responses of 3 or 4 were positive

climate perceptions. This was used to categorize teachers and staff members as negative or positive perceptions groups on each question. Additional columns and categories are in the spreadsheet, and this is just a sample of categories.

Table 1.1
Sample Spreadsheet

| | Staff Type | Gender | Subject | Years Taught | Q. 1 | Q. 2 | Q. 3 | Q. 4 | Q. 5 |
|-----------|------------|--------|---------|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Teacher 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Teacher 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Teacher 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Teacher 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Specific First Cycle Coding Procedures

A survey at the beginning of the OCDQ-RM was used to gather demographic data, which was coded using attribute or descriptive coding. This coding procedure served two purposes. First, it allowed for purposive sampling, and secondly it helped describe each participant in a holistic, individual manner and noted that demographic data can help understand perception (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). While exploring the descriptive data, specific codes emerged within the themes found in the initial reading. For example, the age of the teacher could play a role in the perceptions of climate. The table below provides examples illustrating key words and phrases used in the coding processes:

Table 1.2
Key Words and Phrases from Interviews

| Positive Words | Negative Words |
|--|--|
| approachable, supportive, high expectations, autonomy, visible, respect, collaboration, teamwork, helping, love, flexible, appreciate, input, passionate, chill, celebrations, grace. | unclear, drama, clique, unequal, knit pickers, complaints, instigated, top-down, unhappy, no consequences, stressed, inconsistency, micromanaged, judgment, division, forced. |

Initial coding was used as a starting point to further analyze the themes and categories from the first reading and transcription of data. Saldana (2013) stated that it is recommended to digest the data before beginning the initial coding phases of analysis, and for this study the initial transcription and organization stages of analysis served this purpose. Initial coding began with coding categories of the participants' interviews into climate and other demographic factors, and then the researcher used the other coding methods to explore sub-categories and themes.

In the first cycle coding phases and analyses, magnitude coding was used to seek intensity of feelings and statements, as well as percentages and frequencies (Saldana, 2013). In this study there was a need to understand climate, and to do so, required document reviews of teacher attrition, policies related to these variables, and other magnitude type affects. There was a need to analyze how intense specific responses to certain interview questions were, which allowed for better understanding of the phenomena being studied. This intensity measure added richness to the analyses.

To add value to the data analysis, verbatim coding was used to illustrate meaning and provide a sense that the data was living (Saldana, 2013). This provided reliability and validity components to the study in that the participants' statements were word for word. In the

interview data collected, there were opportunities in which the participant responded to a certain question with a phrase that could only be coded with a quote because of its significance.

Value coding was important for the understanding of whether or not the participant valued the school climate, job, and processes, as well as to what extent. The information participants shared in an interview was what they value most (Saldana, 2013). In this study value coding was used alongside magnitude coding so that the intensity of value could be determined.

The holistic coding was used in the first stages of coding, and later on in the coding to ensure that the data were analyzed through an exploratory manner. The data were chunked to see if the answers to the research questions were present (Saldana, 2013). The sub-categories were also chunked for better understanding. For example, in the observations, the coding was chunked into specific school climatic codes or change process codes.

The use of pattern coding was used to further sub-categorize the data into smaller constructs (Saldana, 2013). This process allowed conclusions and inferences to be drawn from the data collected. For the purpose of this study, patterns were used to describe the perceptions of climate. What the participants stated in the interviews and on surveys were patterned to fit those three superior categories with the other coding procedures in the first cycle to understand their perceptions and draw conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

During the interpretation of data there were numerous ethical considerations. Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) discussed many criteria that should be present in a mixed method (particularly interviews) study when interpreting data which included: integrity,

authenticity, credibility, criticality, vividness, thoroughness, congruence, sensitivity, explicitness, and creativity. Integrity was used while reflecting on the data to ensure that the researcher was not interpreting the data with biases. The researcher prevented many ethical concerns by being “honest and forthright” (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 535). After interpreting the data, conclusions were drawn. Drawing conclusions from a study also required ethical considerations. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) recommended being forthcoming about personal biases, which helps the reader have a better understanding of the conclusions. The conclusions should further the field of education and make meaningful contributions to the field.

Data Storage

The participants’ identities and demographics were coded. The interviews were recorded and stored on an audio storage device, which will be kept secure and confidential. All information gathered was used for professional uses only and participant identification was protected using pseudonyms.

Participant’s Rights

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. The participants were given a copy of their rights which included the disclosure that the participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. Since the study included recorded interviews, full disclosure of the collection and storage methods was provided. Participants were provided contact information for the researcher and the University of Arkansas Review Board. If any future information pertaining to this study was seen to potentially affect the participant’s willingness to continue in the study, he or she would have full disclosure.

Materials

For this study a questionnaire was used to gather data from teachers (see appendix A). The questions were guided by current literature in the related areas of climate and school culture. Additional materials included a digital sound recorder so that accurate (i.e., verbatim) information could be gathered and analyzed. A notepad with interview questions was also used to make notes of facial expressions and other emotional or body language components that would not be gathered from auditory recording devices alone. A USB data storage external device was used to store all data and necessary information. For the analysis of data, a statistical program was used.

Data analysis began with organizing the data into categories and themes. The data analysis processes served the purpose of answering the research questions through multiple methods of data collection. For the purpose of this mixed methods study, two types of qualitative questioning procedures were implemented: epistemological and ontological. Ontological research questions explored participant's personal beliefs and perceptions; whereas, epistemological questions allowed for the understanding of a phenomenon (Saldana, 2013). For each of these methods, specific coding types were used to analyze the data collected. "Some researchers feel that more than one coding method and at least two analytic approaches should be explored in every study to enhance the accountability and the depth and breadth of findings" (Saldana, 2013, p. 60).

Initially, coding the data was thought of as adjustable and non-binding. Saldana (2013) suggested a generic coding strategy that was open to change. In the first cycle, attribute coding, holistic coding, descriptive coding, in vivo coding, initial coding, and values coding are suggested. In the second cycle coding procedures Saldana (2013) recommended using eclectic,

pattern, and focused coding to analyze the data even further. For the purpose of this study, many of these coding methods were explored, as this was necessary since using multiple methods of data collection.

Validity and Trustworthiness

For this study it was important to ensure both validity and trustworthiness among participants and the researcher. The validity would be increased when teachers (participants) trusted the researcher and were possibly more apt to respond honestly to the questionnaire and interview questions. Validity arose from the following: 1) comparison of teachers across schools, grade levels, and other demographical indices, 2) comparison of literature in the areas of study, 3) multiple method data collection, 4) peer review of data analysis, and 5) analysis of data through multiple lenses and perspectives.

To gain teachers' trust, the researcher conveyed to participants the personal desires of the study. The researcher described personal experiences that were relative to the study (i.e., being a past special education teacher and being familiar with much of what the study was seeking to understand). Participants were informed of the confidentiality approaches used to protect their identity, which potentially allowed for more honest responses.

Limitations

Most mixed method designed studies present some limitations, including the current study. One limitation could be found in the context of the study. This study took place in a specific region of Arkansas, meaning that researchers would need a clear understanding of the context and demographics of this study so that aspects of the study would potentially transfer to other settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Teachers in Arkansas, more specifically in the

region selected for the study, may perceive climate in different ways. Schools and districts within the state were all involved in many of the same changes and mandates, since most of these were state-level changes. However, how the change processes were implemented may be quite different, thus allowing for varied perceptions of climate. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) and Nunkoosing (2005) discussed limitations in the interviewing of participants and the threat of reactivity and interview biases being present. Coding the interview as well as transcribing from a digital recorder helped prevent some bias, but much of the data interpretation required a subjective lens (Cresswell, 2013). Another limitation was that the sample size was restricted to the one middle school, in the one district. Time and ability to attract many diverse participants were also limiting factors.

Risks

The participants experienced minimal risks in this study. One possible risk was that the teachers may have feared that the information provided could be used negatively by school leaders and organizations for which they were employed. Another risk was school leaders learning that their schools were experiencing negative climatic perceptions. This could have led to further issues if leaders attempted to use the data to change the negatives in the wrong manner.

Benefits

This study could benefit education by informing school leaders of teachers' perceptions of school climate and its impact on achievement. Having a better understanding of this relationship could result in improvement of academic achievement. With positive components in place, students may also benefit from having happier and more effective teachers and learning

environments. The benefits may also be generalized to other organizations. School leaders could benefit by gaining a better understanding of how their teachers view the school climate.

Chapter 4

Results

This study examined the perceptions of how middle school teachers, administrators, and staff viewed the climate of their school. More specifically, the study investigated the different perceptions of school climate among different school staff. The study also examined the effects demographics had on perception of climate. Sixty-seven teachers were surveyed using the OCDQ-RM survey instrument; 53 teachers and staff responded to the survey for a 79% return rate. Six teachers were selected for interviews to further validate the data gathered through the survey and develop a better understanding of how they perceived the climate of the school.

Demographics

For the purpose of answering the research question of whether or not there was a relationship between various demographics of the participants and their perceptions of climate, it was necessary to collect demographical data. These data were collected at the beginning of the questionnaire by asking 8 questions with categorized responses that could be codified. Question one asked what is his or her position at the school; question two asked what type of teacher (i.e., subject area taught); question three asked what grade level they were associated (i.e., 6th, 7th, or both); question four asked for the length of time at current school; question five asked for the number of different schools for which he or she had worked; question six asked how many years he or she had been an educator; question seven asked for the participants gender; and, question eight asked whether or not the participants were considered special educators or regular educators. Table 2 summarizes the frequency data pertaining to the 8 demographic questions.

Table 2
Demographic Survey Question Response Frequency Distribution

| Question | Responses | N=53 | % |
|--|-----------------------------------|------|-----|
| 1. Which of the following applies to you? | Administrator | 2 | 4% |
| | Teacher | 39 | 74% |
| | Instructional Facilitator | 3 | 6% |
| | Counselor | 1 | 2% |
| | Support Staff | 7 | 13% |
| | Other | 1 | 2% |
| 2. If a teacher, which applies to you? | Reading | 16 | 30% |
| | Math | 11 | 21% |
| | Science | 4 | 8% |
| | Social Studies | 3 | 6% |
| | P.E. | 2 | 4% |
| | Art | 0 | 0% |
| | Music | 2 | 4% |
| | Other | 15 | 28% |
| 3. What grade level? | 6 th | 15 | 2% |
| | 7 th | 12 | 23% |
| | 6 th & 7 th | 26 | 49% |
| 4. How many years at current school? | 0-2 | 13 | 25% |
| | 3-5 | 15 | 28% |
| | 6-10 | 8 | 15% |
| | 11+ | 17 | 32% |
| 5. How many different schools have you worked? | 1 | 6 | 11% |
| | 2 | 20 | 38% |
| | 3 | 9 | 17% |
| | 4+ | 18 | 34% |
| 6. How many years have you been an educator? | 0-3 | 3 | 6% |
| | 4-6 | 4 | 8% |
| | 7-10 | 9 | 17% |
| | 11+ | 37 | 70% |
| 7. What is your gender? | Male | 11 | 21% |
| | Female | 42 | 79% |
| 8. Are you a special educator? | Yes | 10 | 19% |
| | No | 43 | 81% |

Descriptive Statistics

For the purpose of this study, descriptive data were gathered through the Organizational Climate Description for Middle Schools Questionnaire (OCDQ-RM) (Hoy, 2019). Participants rate statements on a scale from 1-4, where 1 is rarely occurs, 2 is sometimes occurs, 3 is often occurs, and 4 is frequently occurs. The questionnaire consisted of 8 dimensions related to climate of a school. Five dimensions would be considered positive climate aspects and three dimensions would be considered negative. Therefore, the scores on the positive dimensions should be high and the scores on the negative dimensions should be low. The positive dimensions include: Supportive Behavior, Committed Behavior, Collegial Behavior, Principal Openness, and Teacher Openness and the negative dimensions include: Directive Behavior, Disengaged Behavior, and Restrictive Behavior.

Description of the OCDQ-RM Dimensions

Supportive principal behavior.

The supportive dimension (subtest scale) is “directed toward both the social needs and task achievement of faculty. The principal is helpful, genuinely concerned with teachers, and attempts to motivate by using constructive criticism and by setting an example through hard work” (Hoy, 2019). This dimension is considered positive. Listed below are the specific statements participants responded to using a 1-4 rating:

- The principal compliments teachers.
- The principal encourages teacher autonomy.
- The principal goes out of his/her way to help teachers.
- The principal is available after school to help teachers when assistance is needed.

- The principal uses constructive criticism.
- The principal looks out for the personal welfare of the faculty.
- The principal listens to and accepts teachers' suggestions.
- The principal treats teachers as equals.
- The principal goes out of his/her way to show appreciation to teachers.
- The principal accepts and implements ideas suggested by faculty members.
- The principal sets an example by working hard himself/herself.

Directive principal behavior.

The directive dimension (subtest scale) is “rigid domineering behavior. The principal maintains close and constant monitoring over virtually all aspects of teacher behavior in the school (Hoy, 2019).” This dimension is considered negative. Listed below are the specific statements participants responded to using a 1-4 rating:

- The principal rules with an iron fist.
- The principal supervises teachers closely.
- The principal corrects teachers' mistakes.
- The principal keeps a close check on sign-in times.
- The principal monitors everything teachers do.
- The principal closely checks teacher activities.

Restrictive principal behavior.

The restrictive dimension (subtest scale) is “behavior that hinders rather than facilitate teacher work. The principal burdens teachers with paperwork, committee requirements, and other demands that interfere with their teaching responsibilities” (Hoy, 2019). This dimension is

considered negative. Listed below are the specific statements participants responded to using a 1-4 rating:

- Teachers are burdened with busywork.
- Routine duties interfere with the job of teaching.
- Administrative paperwork is burdensome at this school.
- Assigned non-teaching duties are excessive.

Collegial teacher behavior.

The collegial dimension (subtest scale) “supports open and professional interaction among teachers. Teachers like, respect, and help one another both professionally and personally” (Hoy, 2019). This dimension is considered positive. Listed below are the specific statements participants responded to using a 1-4 rating:

- Teachers have parties for each other.
- Teachers invite other faculty members to visit them at home.
- Teachers socialize with each other on a regular basis.
- Teachers who have personal problems receive support from other staff members.
- Most of the teachers here accept the faults of their colleagues.
- Teachers have fun socializing together during school time.
- Teachers provide strong social support for colleagues.
- Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues.
- Teachers help and support each other.
- The interactions between team/unit members are cooperative.
- Members of teams/units consider other members to be their friends.

Committed teacher behavior.

The committed dimension (subtest scale) “behavior is directed toward helping students to develop both socially and intellectually. Teachers work extra hard to ensure student success in school” (Hoy, 2019). This dimension is considered positive. Listed below are the specific statements participants responded to using a 1-4 rating:

- Teachers “go the extra mile” with their students.
- Teachers are committed to helping their students.
- Teachers help students on their own time.
- Teachers stay after school to tutor students who need help.
- Teachers accept additional duties if students will benefit.
- Teachers leave school immediately after school is over (opposite scoring).
- Extra help is available to students who need help.
- Teachers volunteer to sponsor after school activities.
- Teachers spend time after school with students who have individual problems.

Disengaged teacher behavior.

The disengage dimension (subtest scale) “signifies a lack of meaning and focus to professional activities. Teachers simply are putting in their time; in fact, they are critical and unaccepting of their colleagues” (Hoy, 2019). This dimension is considered negative. Listed below are the specific statements participants responded to using a 1-4 rating:

- Teachers interrupt other teachers who are talking in staff meetings.
- Teachers exert group pressure on non-conforming faculty members.
- Teachers are rude to other staff members.

- Teachers make “wise cracks” to each other during meetings.
- Teachers mock teachers who are different.
- Teachers don’t listen to other teachers.
- Teachers like to hear gossip about other staff members.
- Teachers are polite to one another (opposite scoring).

Principal openness and teacher openness.

The two openness dimensions were analyzed by using responses and scores from the six main dimensions (i.e., Supportive, Committed, Directive, Collegial, Disengaged, and Restrictive). The Principal Openness and the Teacher Openness dimensions are both considered positive, and higher scores indicated a more positive climate perception. The Principal Openness dimension was computed with the following formula: $\{(standard\ score\ for\ Supportive\ dimension) + (1000 - standard\ score\ for\ Directive\ dimension) + (1000 - standard\ score\ for\ Restrictive\ dimension)\} / 3$. The Teacher Openness dimension was computed with the following formula: $\{(standard\ score\ for\ Collegial\ dimension) + (standard\ score\ for\ Committed\ dimension) + (1000 - standard\ score\ for\ Disengaged\ dimension)\} / 3$. The OCDQ-RM has been validated through a large sample of diverse schools in New Jersey. For the purpose of this study, the raw scores for each individual participant were calculated using the scoring rubric provided, and then these scores were also used to compute a standardized score for each participant using the formula provided by Hoy and Sabo (1998). The openness subscales require a standardized score to equate and interpret. All of the descriptive statistics were reported using both the raw scores and the standardized scores. In order to find the standard score, an equation using each individual participant’s raw scores and a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 was used. Comparisons between the current sample’s scores on the OCDQ-RM and the normative population’s scores were done; however,

the most relevant data came from the comparisons made between the current sample's various groupings. Table 3 shows the population (New Jersey public school teachers) scores from the OCDQ-RM that were used to standardized the questionnaire.

Table 3
Population (New Jersey Schools) Raw Validated OCDQ-RM Scores (Hoy & Sabo, 1998)

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive Behavior (Sup) | 11-44 | 29.39 | 4.61 |
| Directive Behavior (Dir) | 9-36 | 12.09 | 2.40 |
| Restrictive Behavior (Res) | 6-24 | 9.11 | 1.52 |
| Collegial Behavior (Col) | 11-44 | 29.30 | 3.01 |
| Committed Behavior (Com) | 9-36 | 26.76 | 2.74 |
| Disengaged Behavior (Dis) | 4-16 | 15.56 | 2.18 |
| Principal Openness | 51-802 | 500 | 100 |
| Teacher Openness | 231-875 | 500 | 100 |

Group Comparison Descriptive Statistics

For the purpose of answering the research question of whether or not different teacher groups perceived the school climate in different ways (i.e., more positive or negative), it was necessary to calculate descriptive statistics on multiple groups. Each group's score was compared to the standardized scores in Table 3, which will be used to analyze the data and draw conclusions. The next few pages will consist of tables that illustrate the descriptive statistics for various groups used in this study. The first table (Table 4.0) consisted of results from the whole sample group of participants in this study (N=53).

Table 4.0
Whole Group (N=53) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| Dimension | Range of Scores | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 17-44 | 32.06 | 6.29 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-35 | 28.40 | 3.88 |
| Directive (Dir) | 6-20 | 13.85 | 2.92 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-41 | 31.36 | 4.23 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-29 | 17.79 | 4.57 |
| Restricted (Res) | 4-16 | 9.72 | 2.68 |
| Principal Openness | 241-711 | 481.87 | 111.18 |
| Teacher Openness | 234-791 | 508.02 | 132.46 |

Table 4.1 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the special education sub-group.

Table 4.1
Special Education Sub-Group (N=10) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| Dimension | Range of Scores | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 17-42 | 33 | 6.77 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-34 | 27.60 | 4.32 |
| Directive (Dir) | 6-18 | 13.40 | 3.32 |
| Collegial (Col) | 29-35 | 33.10 | 1.97 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 11-27 | 20 | 4.38 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 6-15 | 10.40 | 2.54 |
| Principal Openness | 300-646 | 482.60 | 95.03 |
| Teacher Openness | 374-672 | 484.60 | 111.25 |

Table 4.2 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the non-special education sub-group.

Table 4.2
Non-Special Education Sub-Group (N=43) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 20-44 | 31.83 | 6.16 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-35 | 28.58 | 3.75 |
| Directive (Dir) | 8-20 | 13.95 | 2.81 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-41 | 30.95 | 4.50 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-29 | 17.28 | 4.46 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 4-16 | 9.56 | 2.69 |
| Principal Openness | 241-711 | 481.70 | 114.61 |
| Teacher Openness | 234-791 | 513.47 | 136.34 |

Table 4.3 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the 6th grade sub-group.

Table 4.3
6th Grade Sub-Group (N=15) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 17-40 | 31.07 | 6.72 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-34 | 28.07 | 3.60 |
| Directive (Dir) | 6-20 | 13.60 | 3.61 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-37 | 29.93 | 4.19 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 13-24 | 18.20 | 3.25 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 4-14 | 9.47 | 3.01 |
| Principal Openness | 295-703 | 480.40 | 129.12 |
| Teacher Openness | 243-661 | 482.33 | 109.76 |

Table 4.4 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the 7th grade sub-group.

Table 4.4
7th Grade Sub-Group (N=12) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 20-44 | 30.67 | 7.28 |
| Committed (Com) | 22-35 | 28.42 | 4.05 |
| Directive (Dir) | 11-17 | 13.33 | 1.70 |
| Collegial (Col) | 26-38 | 33.42 | 3.77 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-27 | 17.25 | 5.43 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 5-16 | 10.25 | 2.83 |
| Principal Openness | 241-711 | 467.17 | 130.57 |
| Teacher Openness | 291-766 | 539.83 | 146.07 |

Table 4.5 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the reading sub-group.

Table 4.5
Reading Sub-Group (N=16) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 17-41 | 29.25 | 6.11 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-32 | 26.25 | 3.51 |
| Directive (Dir) | 6-18 | 12.19 | 2.67 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-37 | 30.00 | 4.57 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-27 | 19.63 | 4.14 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 7-14 | 10.44 | 1.97 |
| Principal Openness | 315-632 | 470.13 | 82.61 |
| Teacher Openness | 243-678 | 437.81 | 124.79 |

Table 4.6 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the whole group non-reading sub-group.

Table 4.6
Whole Group Non-Reading Sub-Group (N=37) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 20-44 | 33.27 | 5.98 |
| Committed (Com) | 22-35 | 29.32 | 3.66 |
| Directive (Dir) | 9-20 | 14.57 | 2.73 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-41 | 31.95 | 3.92 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 10-29 | 17.00 | 4.53 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 4-16 | 9.41 | 2.88 |
| Principal Openness | 241-711 | 486.95 | 121.12 |
| Teacher Openness | 234-791 | 538.38 | 123.87 |

Table 4.7 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the math sub-group.

Table 4.7
Math Sub-Group (N=11) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| Dimension | Range of Scores | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 20-41 | 32.18 | 6.52 |
| Committed (Com) | 22-35 | 29.45 | 3.75 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-19 | 14.18 | 2.52 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-38 | 31.55 | 3.96 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 13-22 | 17.45 | 3.17 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 4-16 | 10.18 | 3.33 |
| Principal Openness | 241-703 | 467.00 | 138.86 |
| Teacher Openness | 374-661 | 528.64 | 99.84 |

Table 4.8 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the whole group non-math sub-group.

Table 4.8
Whole Group Non-Math Sub-Group (N=42) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 17-44 | 32.02 | 6.23 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-35 | 28.12 | 3.87 |
| Directive (Dir) | 6-20 | 13.76 | 3.01 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-41 | 31.31 | 4.29 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-29 | 17.88 | 4.87 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 5-15 | 9.60 | 2.47 |
| Principal Openness | 295-711 | 485.76 | 102.35 |
| Teacher Openness | 234-791 | 502.62 | 139.24 |

Table 4.9 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the male gender sub-group.

Table 4.9
Male Sub-Group (N=11) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| <u>Dimension</u> | <u>Range of Scores</u> | <u>Mean (M)</u> | <u>Std. Deviation (SD)</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 20-40 | 32.91 | 5.38 |
| Committed (Com) | 23-35 | 28.64 | 3.87 |
| Directive (Dir) | 10-17 | 13.37 | 2.06 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-38 | 30.73 | 3.62 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 11-21 | 16.45 | 3.29 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 5-16 | 9.18 | 2.69 |
| Principal Openness | 241-674 | 505.09 | 102.25 |
| Teacher Openness | 402-766 | 524.73 | 107.32 |

Table 4.10 shows the results from each of the OCDQ-RM domains for the female gender sub-group.

Table 4.10
Female Sub-Group (N=42) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results

| Dimension | Range of Scores | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|
| Supportive (Sup) | 17-44 | 31.83 | 6.49 |
| Committed (Com) | 21-35 | 28.33 | 3.88 |
| Directive (Dir) | 6-20 | 13.98 | 3.10 |
| Collegial (Col) | 23-41 | 31.52 | 4.35 |
| Disengaged (Dis) | 9-29 | 18.14 | 4.79 |
| Restrictive (Res) | 4-15 | 9.86 | 2.66 |
| Principal Openness | 278-711 | 475.79 | 112.62 |
| Teacher Openness | 234-791 | 503.64 | 137.95 |

Independent T-Test Results

For the purpose of answering the research questions regarding whether or not different groups of teachers (i.e., sub-groups) perceived the climate of the school the same or differently as well as whether or not demographics affected climate perception, multiple independent t-tests were performed. Several sub-groups were compared using their group mean to see if there was a significant difference between groups on each of the eight climate dimensions (supportive, committed, directive, collegial, disengaged, restrictive, and the two sub-categories: principal and teacher openness) on the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. The supportive, committed, collegial, and both openness dimensions are considered positive climate features, thus high scores on these dimensions indicate a higher positive climate perception. Whereas, the negative climate feature

dimensions are directive, disengaged, and restrictive, and higher scores on these indicate a more negative climate perception.

The following sub-groups were compared using an independent sample t-test: male vs female, reading vs non-reading (all others), math vs non-math, reading vs math, all special education vs non-special education, special education teachers only vs all others (whole group minus special education teachers), 6th grade vs 7th grade, new teachers at school (0-2 years) vs veteran teachers at school (11+ years), new to education (0-10 years as educator) vs veteran to education (more than 10 years as educator), teachers vs all other (administration, support, etc.), and core teachers (science, reading, math, and social studies subject area teachers) vs all other (elective teachers, support, administration, etc.). Each of these group comparison results will be reported in the following section. For each of the group comparisons, the researcher assumed no significant difference in how the groups perceive the school climate based on the 8 dimensions of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. Any significant differences ($P < 0.05$) are displayed at the end of this section.

Male v female.

For the two groups, males ($N=11$) and females ($N=42$), an independent sample t-test ($P < 0.05$) was performed using all 8 dimensions of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. For the Supportive (positive) dimension, there was no significant difference between males ($M=32.91$, $SD=5.38$) and females ($M=31.83$, $SD=6.49$) perception; $t(51)=0.5071$, $p=0.6143$. The Committed (positive) dimension had no significant difference between males ($M=28.64$, $SD=3.87$) and females ($M=28.33$, $SD=3.88$) perception; $t(51)=0.2360$, $p=0.8144$. Scores on the Directive (negative) dimension also indicated that there was no significant difference between males ($M=13.37$, $SD=2.06$) and females ($M=13.98$, $SD=3.10$) perception; $t(51)=0.6156$,

$p=0.5409$. For the Collegial (positive) dimension, there was no significant difference in how males ($M=30.73$, $SD=3.62$) and females ($M=31.52$, $SD=4.35$) scored; $t(51)=0.5531$, $p=0.5826$. The Disengaged (negative) dimension scores had no significant difference between males ($M=16.45$, $SD=3.29$) and females ($M=18.14$, $SD=4.79$) responses; $t(51)=1.1002$, $p=0.2764$. For the Restrictive (negative) dimension, there was no significant difference between males ($M=9.18$, $SD=2.69$) and females ($M=9.86$, $SD=2.66$) perception of climate; $t(51)=0.7531$, $p=0.4549$. On the Principal Openness (positive) dimension, there was no significant difference in how males ($M=505.09$, $SD=102.25$) and females ($M=475.79$, $SD=112.62$) perceived this climate aspect; $t(51)=0.7817$, $p=0.4380$. Lastly, on the Teacher Openness (positive) dimension, males ($M=524.73$, $SD=107.32$) and females ($M=503.64$, $SD=137.95$) had no significant difference in perception; $t(51)=0.4699$, $p=0.6404$. Table 5.1 summarizes these results:

Table 5.1
Male (N=11) v. Female (N=42) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | Male | 32.91 | 5.38 | 0.5071 | 0.6143 |
| | Female | 31.83 | 6.49 | | |
| Committed | Male | 28.64 | 3.87 | 0.2360 | 0.8144 |
| | Female | 28.33 | 3.88 | | |
| Directive | Male | 13.37 | 2.06 | 0.6156 | 0.5409 |
| | Female | 13.98 | 3.10 | | |
| Collegial | Male | 30.73 | 3.62 | 0.5531 | 0.5826 |
| | Female | 31.52 | 4.35 | | |
| Disengaged | Male | 16.45 | 3.29 | 1.1002 | 0.2764 |
| | Female | 18.14 | 4.79 | | |
| Restrictive | Male | 9.18 | 2.69 | 0.7531 | 0.4549 |
| | Female | 9.86 | 2.66 | | |
| Principal Openness | Male | 505.09 | 102.25 | 0.7817 | 0.4380 |
| | Female | 475.79 | 112.62 | | |
| Teacher Openness | Male | 524.73 | 107.32 | 0.4699 | 0.6404 |
| | Female | 503.64 | 137.95 | | |

As for each comparison made between male and female on the 8 dimensions, there were no significant differences found. This indicates that there is no gender effect on how the teachers perceive the climate of the school. In other words, males and females both perceive the school in similar ways.

Reading v non-reading (all others).

For the two groups, reading (N=16) and non-reading (all other participant groups) (N=42), an independent sample t-test ($P < 0.05$) was performed using all 8 dimensions of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. For the Supportive (positive) dimension, the reading group (M=29.25, SD=6.11) and the non-reading group (M=33.27, SD=5.98) had a significant difference in how they perceived this aspect of the climate; $t(51)=2.2323$, $p=0.030$. For the Committed (positive) dimension, the reading group (M=26.25, SD=3.51) and non-reading group (M=29.32, SD=3.66) were significantly different in their perception of this aspect of climate; $t(51)=2.8371$, $p=0.0065$. On the Directive (negative) dimension, the reading group (M=12.19, SD=2.67) and the non-reading group (M=14.57, SD=2.73) scored significantly different; $t(51)=2.9325$, $p=0.0050$. For the Collegial (positive) dimension, the reading (M=30.00, SD=4.57) and the non-reading (M=31.95, SD=3.92) groups were not significantly different in their perception of climate regarding this domain—albeit there was a strong difference to be noted; $t(51)=1.5811$, $p=0.12$. The difference in reading (M=19.63, SD=4.14) and non-reading (M=17.00, SD=4.53) groups on the Disengaged (negative) dimension was not significant, although it was a very strong difference; $t(51)=1.9892$, $p=0.0521$. On the Restrictive (negative) dimension, the reading group (M=10.44, SD=1.97) and the non-reading group (M=9.41, SD=2.88) were not significantly different in their perceptions, however, there was a moderate difference; $t(51)=1.3014$, $p=0.1990$. On the Principal Openness (positive) dimension, the reading group (M=470.13, SD=82.61) and the non-reading group (M=486.95, SD=121.12) were not significantly different on this domain; $t(51)=0.5056$, $p=0.6153$. Lastly, on the Teacher Openness (positive) dimension reading teachers (M=437.18, SD=124.79) and the non-reading

teachers ($M=538.38$, $SD=123.87$) were significantly different in their scores; $t(51)=2.7075$, $p=0.0092$. Table 5.2 summarizes these results:

Table 5.2
Reading (N=16) v. Non-Reading (N=42) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|-------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | Reading | 29.25 | 6.11 | 2.2323 | 0.030* |
| | Non-Reading | 33.27 | 5.98 | | |
| Committed | Reading | 26.25 | 3.51 | 2.8371 | 0.0065* |
| | Non-Reading | 29.32 | 3.66 | | |
| Directive | Reading | 12.19 | 2.67 | 2.9325 | 0.0053* |
| | Non-Reading | 14.57 | 2.73 | | |
| Collegial | Reading | 30.00 | 4.57 | 1.5811 | 0.12 |
| | Non-Reading | 31.95 | 3.92 | | |
| Disengaged | Reading | 19.63 | 4.14 | 1.9892 | 0.0521 |
| | Non-Reading | 17.00 | 4.53 | | |
| Restrictive | Reading | 10.44 | 1.97 | 1.3014 | 0.1990 |
| | Non-Reading | 9.41 | 2.88 | | |
| Principal Openness | Reading | 470.13 | 82.61 | 0.5056 | 0.6153 |
| | Non-Reading | 486.95 | 121.12 | | |
| Teacher Openness | Reading | 437.18 | 124.79 | 2.7075 | 0.0092* |
| | Non-Reading | 538.38 | 123.87 | | |

*indicates a significant difference

In summary, there were no differences in how the reading group and all other, non-reading group perceived the climate based on the Collegial, Disengaged, Restrictive, and Principal Openness dimensions. However, on the Supportive and Committed dimensions the reading group perceived the school climate as less supportive and less committed when

compared to the non-reading group at a statistically significant level. Additionally, the reading group perceived the school climate as significantly less directive when compared to the non-reading group. The reading group also perceived the Teacher Openness dimension at a significantly lower level when compared to the non-reading group.

Math v non-math (all others).

The math sub-group (N=11) and the non-math sub-group (all other participants) (N=42) were compared using an independent t-test ($P < 0.05$) on all 8 dimensions of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire to see if there was a significant difference in how the groups perceived the climate of the middle school. The Supportive (positive) dimension had no significant difference between the math group (M=32.18, SD=6.52) and the non-math group (M=32.02, SD=6.23) perceptions of this aspect of climate; $t(51)=0.0751$, $p=0.9404$. The Committed (positive) dimension showed that there was no significant difference when comparing the perceptions of the math group (M=29.45, SD=3.75) and the non-math group (M=28.12, SD=3.87); $t(51)=1.0208$, $p=0.3122$. When looking at the Directive (negative) dimension, there was no significant difference in how the math group (M=14.18, SD=2.52) and the non-math group (M=13.76, SD=3.01) perceived the climate; $t(51)=0.4246$, $p=0.6729$. The Collegial (positive) dimension scores comparison between the math group (M=31.55, SD=3.96) and the non-math group (M=31.31, SD=4.29) found that there was no significant difference in how these two groups perceived this aspect of climate; $t(51)=0.1676$, $p=0.8675$. On the Disengaged (negative) dimension of the OCDQ-RM, the math group (M=17.45, SD=3.17) and the non-math group (M=17.88, SD=4.87) did not have a significant difference in their perceptions; $t(51)=0.2768$, $p=0.7831$. When comparing the math group (M=10.18, SD=3.33) and the non-math group (M=9.60, SD=2.47) on the Restrictive (negative) dimension of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire, the two groups did not score significantly

different; $t(51)=0.6436$, $p=0.5227$. As for the Principal Openness dimension, the math group ($M=467$, $SD=138.86$) and the non-math group ($M=485.76$, $SD=102.35$) did not have significant differences in their perceptions, $t(51)=0.5014$, $p=0.6182$. On the Teacher Openness dimension, the math group ($M=528.64$, $SD=99.84$) and the non-math group ($M=502.62$, $SD=139.24$) had no significant difference in their perceptions of this dimension, $t(51)=0.5801$, $p=0.5644$. Table 5.3 summarizes the results:

Table 5.3
Math (N=11) v. Non-Math (N=42) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|----------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | Math | 32.18 | 6.52 | 0.0751 | 0.9404 |
| | Non-Math | 32.02 | 6.23 | | |
| Committed | Math | 29.45 | 3.75 | 1.0208 | 0.3122 |
| | Non-Math | 28.12 | 3.87 | | |
| Directive | Math | 14.18 | 5.52 | 0.4246 | 0.6729 |
| | Non-Math | 13.76 | 3.01 | | |
| Collegial | Math | 31.55 | 3.96 | 0.1676 | 0.8675 |
| | Non-Math | 31.31 | 4.29 | | |
| Disengaged | Math | 17.45 | 3.17 | 0.2768 | 0.7831 |
| | Non-Math | 17.88 | 4.87 | | |
| Restrictive | Math | 10.18 | 3.33 | 0.6436 | 0.5227 |
| | Non-Math | 9.60 | 2.47 | | |
| Principal Openness | Math | 467 | 138.86 | 0.5014 | 0.6182 |
| | Non-Math | 485.76 | 102.35 | | |
| Teacher Openness | Math | 528.64 | 99.84 | 0.5801 | 0.5644 |
| | Non-Math | 502.62 | 139.24 | | |

In summary, the math group and the non-math group had no significant differences in how they perceived the school climate based on the 8 dimensions. These two groups perceived the school in similar ways.

Reading v math.

The two sub-groups reading (N=16) and math (N=11) were compared on the 8 dimensions of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire using an independent t-test ($p < 0.05$) to determine if the groups differed in their perceptions of school climate. The first dimension used to compare the groups was the Supportive (positive) dimension. On the Supportive dimension, the reading group (M= 29.25, SD=6.11) and the math group (M=32.18, SD=6.52) were not significantly different in their perceptions of climate, however, there was a moderate difference in the groups; $t(25)=1.1917$, $p=0.2446$. On the Committed (positive) dimension, the reading group (M=26.25, SD=3.51) and the math group (M=29.45, SD=3.75) were significantly different in their perceptions, $t(25)=2.2645$, $p=0.0325$. When looking at the two groups comparison of the Directive (negative) dimension, the reading group (M=12.19, SD=2.67) and the math group (M=14.18, SD=2.52) were not significantly different in their perceptions, although, there was a very strong difference, $t(25)=1.9459$, $p=0.0630$. On the Collegial (positive) dimension, the reading group (M=30.00, SD=4.57) and the math group (M=31.55, SD=3.96) were not significantly different in their perceptions of this climate aspect; $t(25)=0.9126$, $p=0.3702$. The Disengaged (negative) dimension did not have a significant difference in how the reading group (M=19.63, SD=4.14) and the math group (M=17.45, SD=3.17) perceived the climate on this aspect of the OCDQ-RM questionnaire; $t(25)=1.4717$, $p=0.1536$, which is considered to be a strong difference, but not significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The reading group (M=10.44, SD=1.97) and the math group (M=10.18, SD=3.33) were compared on the Restrictive (negative)

dimension and it was found that there was no significant difference in how the two groups perceived this aspect of climate, $t(25)=0.2552$, $p=0.8006$. When the two groups were compared on the Principal Openness (positive) scale, the reading group ($M=470.13$, $SD=82.61$) and the math group ($M=467$, $SD=138.86$) were not significantly different in their perceptions; $t(25)=0.0735$, $p=0.9420$. On the last dimension of Teacher Openness, the reading group ($M=437.18$, $SD=124.79$) and the math group ($M=528.64$, $SD=99.84$) did not have significant differences in their perception of this aspect of climate on the OCDQ-RM, however, the differences were very close to being significant at the $p<0.05$ level; $t(25)=2.0085$, $p=0.0555$.

Table 5.4 summarizes the results:

Table 5.4
Reading (N=16) v. Math (N=11) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | Reading | 29.25 | 6.11 | 1.1917 | 0.2446 |
| | Math | 32.18 | 6.52 | | |
| Committed | Reading | 26.25 | 3.51 | 2.2645 | 0.0325* |
| | Math | 29.45 | 3.75 | | |
| Directive | Reading | 12.19 | 2.67 | 1.9459 | 0.0630 |
| | Math | 14.18 | 2.52 | | |
| Collegial | Reading | 30.00 | 4.57 | 0.9126 | 0.3702 |
| | Math | 31.55 | 3.96 | | |
| Disengaged | Reading | 19.63 | 4.14 | 1.4717 | 0.1536 |
| | Math | 17.45 | 3.17 | | |
| Restrictive | Reading | 10.44 | 1.97 | 0.2552 | 0.8006 |
| | Math | 10.18 | 3.33 | | |
| Principal Openness | Reading | 470.13 | 82.61 | 0.0735 | 0.9420 |
| | Math | 467.00 | 138.86 | | |
| Teacher Openness | Reading | 437.18 | 127.79 | 2.0085 | 0.0555 |
| | Math | 528.64 | 99.84 | | |

*indicates a significant difference

In summary, the reading group compared to the math group only had one dimension for which they had significantly different perceptions of school climate. The math group had significantly higher scores on the Committed dimension when compared to the reading group. The two groups were similar in their perceptions of the remaining 7 dimensions.

All special education v all non-special education.

The two groups of all special education (N=10) and all non-special education (N=43) were compared on the 8 climate dimensions from the OCDQ-RM questionnaire using an independent t-test. Each of the 8 dimensions were compared using the group mean in each climate category. On the Supportive (positive) dimension, the special education group (M=33, SD=6.77) and the non-special education group (M=31.83, SD=6.16) were not significantly different in their perceptions of this aspect of climate; $t(51)=0.5313$, $p=0.5975$. The Committed (positive) dimension comparison between the special education group (M=27.6, SD=4.32) and the non-special education group (M=28.58, SD=3.75) indicated that there was no significant difference in how the groups perceived the committed aspect of climate; $t(51)=0.7238$, $p=0.4725$. When looking at the Directive (negative) dimension, the special education group (M=13.40, SD=3.32) and the non-special education group (M=13.95, SD=2.81) were not significantly different in their perceptions; $t(51)=0.5390$, $p=0.5922$. The Collegial (positive) dimension results indicated that the special education group (M=33.1, SD=1.97) and the non-special education group (M=30.95, SD=4.5) were not significantly different, although, there was a strong difference between the two groups; $t(51)=1.4697$, $p=0.1478$. In regard to the Disengaged (negative) dimension, the special education group (M=20.00, SD=4.38) and the non-special education group (M=17.28, SD=4.46) there was not a significant difference in the two groups' perceptions, however there was a very strong difference worth noting; $t(51)=1.7426$, $p=0.0874$. The Restrictive (negative) dimension comparison between the special education group (M=10.4, SD=2.54) and the non-special education group (M=9.56, SD=2.69) resulted in a non-significant difference in perception; $t(51)=0.8981$, $p=0.3734$. Results from the comparison of group perceptions with the Principal Openness (positive) dimension indicated that there was

no significant differences in the special education group (M=482.60, SD=95.03) and the non-special education group (M= 481.70, SD=114.61) perceptions of this climate aspect; $t(51)=0.0230$, $p=0.9817$. Lastly, the Teacher Openness dimension scores comparison also indicated a non-significant difference in how the special education group (M=484.60, SD=111.25) and the non-special education group (M=513.47, SD=136.34) perceived this aspect of climate; $t(51)=0.6218$, $p=0.5369$. Table 5.5 summarizes the results:

Table 5.5
SPED (N=10) v. Non-SPED (N=43) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|----------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | SPED | 33.00 | 6.77 | 0.5313 | 0.5975 |
| | Non-SPED | 31.83 | 6.16 | | |
| Committed | SPED | 27.60 | 4.32 | 0.7238 | 0.4725 |
| | Non-SPED | 28.58 | 3.75 | | |
| Directive | SPED | 13.40 | 3.32 | 0.5390 | 0.5922 |
| | Non-SPED | 13.95 | 2.81 | | |
| Collegial | SPED | 33.10 | 1.97 | 1.4697 | 0.1478 |
| | Non-SPED | 30.95 | 4.50 | | |
| Disengaged | SPED | 20.00 | 4.38 | 1.7426 | 0.0874 |
| | Non-SPED | 17.28 | 4.46 | | |
| Restrictive | SPED | 10.40 | 2.54 | 0.8981 | 0.3734 |
| | Non-SPED | 9.56 | 2.69 | | |
| Principal Openness | SPED | 482.60 | 95.03 | 0.0230 | 0.9817 |
| | Non-SPED | 481.70 | 114.61 | | |
| Teacher Openness | SPED | 484.60 | 111.25 | 0.6218 | 0.5369 |
| | Non-SPED | 513.47 | 136.34 | | |

To summarize, the special education group (teachers and others included) and the non-special education group had no significant differences in how they perceived the school climate on the 8 dimensions. The groups perceived the school climate in similar ways.

Special education (teachers only) v all other participants.

This comparison was similar to the all-special education vs all non-special education, but this comparison sub-group was special education teachers only and did not include support staff or other special education positions (e.g., speech pathologist). The special education (teachers only) group (N=5) and the all-other participants group (N=48) was compared using an independent t-test ($p < 0.05$) on the 8 dimensions from the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. When looking at the Supportive (positive) dimension, the special education teacher group (M=29.6, SD=6.89) and the all other participants group (M=32.31, SD=6.17) did not have significantly different perceptions of this aspect of climate; $t(51)=0.9257$, $p=0.3589$. The results from the Committed (positive) dimension indicated a significant difference, $t(51)=2.7038$, $p=0.0093$, between special education teachers (M=24.2, SD=3.19) and all other participants (M=28.83, SD=3.68) perception of climate. On the climate dimension of Directive (negative), the special education teacher group (M=11.4, SD=2.87) and the all other participants group (M=14.10, SD=2.81) were significantly different in the group perceptions; $t(51)=2.0412$, $p=0.0464$. With the Collegial (positive) dimension, the special education teacher group (M=32.2, SD=1.94) and the all other participants group (M=31.27, SD=4.39) were not significantly different in perception of climate; $t(51)=0.4657$, $p=0.6434$. The special education teachers group (M=21.4, SD=1.36) and the all other participants group (M=17.42, SD=4.63) did not have significant differences in their perceptions of the Disengaged (negative) dimension; $t(51)=1.8985$, $p=0.0633$ —although these two groups were very strongly different (i.e., nearly a significant

difference at the 95% confidence interval). On the Restrictive (negative) dimension of the questionnaire, the special education teachers group ($M=10.8$, $SD=1.6$) and the all other participants group ($M=9.60$, $SD=2.74$) did not have a significant difference in perception; $t(51)=0.9570$, $p=0.3431$. When looking at the Principal Openness (positive) dimension, the special education teachers group ($M=480$, $SD=51.45$) and the all other participants group ($M=482.06$, $SD=115.64$) were not significantly different in their perceptions; $t(51)= 0.0392$, $p=0.9689$. Lastly, the Teacher Openness (positive) dimension results indicated a non-significant difference between the special education teachers group ($M=412$, $SD=46.81$) and the all other participants group ($M=513.47$, $SD=136.34$); $t(51)=1.7388$, $p=0.0881$, in their perceptions— however, this was a very strong difference in the two groups. Table 5.6 summarizes the results:

Table 5.6
SPED Teachers (N=5) v. All Others (N=48) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | SPED Teachers | 29.60 | 6.89 | 0.9257 | 0.3589 |
| | All Others | 32.31 | 6.17 | | |
| Committed | SPED Teachers | 24.20 | 3.19 | 2.7038 | 0.0093* |
| | All Others | 28.83 | 3.68 | | |
| Directive | SPED Teachers | 11.40 | 2.87 | 2.0412 | 0.0464* |
| | All Others | 14.10 | 2.81 | | |
| Collegial | SPED Teachers | 32.20 | 1.94 | 0.4657 | 0.6434 |
| | All Others | 31.27 | 4.39 | | |
| Disengaged | SPED Teachers | 21.40 | 1.36 | 1.8985 | 0.0633 |
| | All Others | 17.42 | 4.63 | | |
| Restrictive | SPED Teachers | 10.80 | 1.60 | 0.9570 | 0.3431 |
| | All Others | 9.60 | 2.74 | | |
| Principal Openness | SPED Teachers | 480.00 | 51.45 | 0.0392 | 0.9689 |
| | All Others | 482.06 | 115.64 | | |
| Teacher Openness | SPED Teachers | 412.00 | 46.81 | 1.7388 | 0.0881 |
| | All Others | 513.47 | 136.34 | | |

*indicates a significant difference

In summary, the special education teacher group compared to the all-others group did not perceive the climate any differently on the Supportive, Collegial, Restrictive, Disengaged, Principal Openness, or Teacher Openness dimensions. However, the two groups did perceive the school climate significantly different on the Committed and Directive dimensions. The special education teacher group scores on the Committed dimension were significantly lower than the all-others group. Additionally, the special education teacher group scores were significantly lower on the Directive dimension when compared to all others in the sample.

6th grade only v 7th grade only.

For the purpose of answering the research questions and sub-questions, the 6th grade only teachers, administrators, and staff members (N=15) and the 7th grade only teachers, administrators, and staff members (N=12) were compared. Each group mean for the 8 climate questionnaire dimensions were used in the comparison to see if there was a significant difference in the group perceptions at the 95% confidence interval. On the Supportive, Committed, Directive, Disengaged, Restrictive, Principal Openness, and Teacher Openness scales there was no significant difference in how the two groups perceived the school climate. When looking at the Collegial (positive) dimension, the 6th grade only group (M=29.93, SD=4.19) and the 7th grade only group (M=33.42, 3.77) were significantly different in their perceptions; $t(51)=2.2468$, $p=0.0337$. Table 5.7 summarizes the results:

Table 5.7
6th Grade (N=15) v. 7th Grade (N=12) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | 6 th Grade | 31.07 | 6.72 | 0.1481 | 0.8834 |
| | 7 th Grade | 30.67 | 7.28 | | |
| Committed | 6 th Grade | 28.07 | 3.60 | 0.2375 | 0.8142 |
| | 7 th Grade | 28.42 | 4.05 | | |
| Directive | 6 th Grade | 13.60 | 3.61 | 0.2381 | 0.8137 |
| | 7 th Grade | 13.33 | 1.70 | | |
| Collegial | 6 th Grade | 29.93 | 4.19 | 2.2468 | 0.0337* |
| | 7 th Grade | 33.42 | 3.77 | | |
| Disengaged | 6 th Grade | 18.20 | 3.25 | 0.5644 | 0.5775 |
| | 7 th Grade | 17.25 | 5.43 | | |
| Restrictive | 6 th Grade | 9.47 | 3.01 | 0.6868 | 0.4985 |
| | 7 th Grade | 10.25 | 2.83 | | |
| Principal Openness | 6 th Grade | 480.40 | 129.12 | 0.2633 | 0.7945 |
| | 7 th Grade | 467.17 | 130.57 | | |
| Teacher Openness | 6 th Grade | 482.53 | 109.76 | 1.1688 | 0.2535 |
| | 7 th Grade | 539.83 | 146.07 | | |

*indicates a significant difference

In summary, the 6th grade group compared to the 7th grade group had no differences in their perceptions of school climate on 7 out of the 8 dimensions. The two groups did have significant differences in how they perceived collegiality. The 6th grade only group had significantly lower scores on the Collegial dimension when compared to the 7th grade only group.

New staff at school v more than 10 years at school.

For the purpose of answering the research question about demographical differences in teacher perceptions, it was necessary to compare the new to the school teachers (i.e., at the current school 0-2 years) (N=13) to the more than 10 years at current school (N=17). The groups were compared using the group mean of each climate questionnaire dimension. On the Supportive, Committed, Directive, Collegial, Disengaged, and Teacher Openness scales, there was not a significant difference in the group's perceptions. Although, there was a very strong difference between the new staff at school group (M=33.85, SD=3.55) and the more than 10 years at school group (M=31.41, SD=3.27) perceptions of the Collegial (positive) dimension; $t(28)=1.9519$, $p=0.0610$. On two of the climate questionnaire dimensions: Restrictive (negative) and Principal Openness (positive), there was a significant difference between the groups. The new to school group (M=8.31, SD=2.49) and the more than 10 years at school group (M=10.88, SD=2.25) had significant differences in perception of the Restrictive dimension; $t(28)=2.9609$, $p=0.0062$. On the Principal Openness dimension, the new to school group (M=525.54, SD=124.46) and the more than 10 years at school group (M=440.94, SD=99.48) were significantly different on their perception of this dimension; $t(28)=2.0709$, $p=0.0477$. Table 5.8 summarizes the results:

Table 5.8
0-2 Years (N=13) v. +10 Years (N=17) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|-----------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | 0-2 Years | 34.62 | 6.49 | 1.4539 | 0.1571 |
| | +10 Years | 31.41 | 5.59 | | |
| Committed | 0-2 Years | 29.38 | 3.16 | 0.0249 | 0.9803 |
| | +10 Years | 29.41 | 3.36 | | |
| Directive | 0-2 Years | 14.23 | 3.17 | 0.3469 | 0.7313 |
| | +10 Years | 14.59 | 2.52 | | |
| Collegial | 0-2 Years | 33.85 | 3.55 | 1.9519 | 0.0610 |
| | +10 Years | 31.41 | 3.27 | | |
| Disengaged | 0-2 Years | 16.85 | 5.22 | 0.4076 | 0.6867 |
| | +10 Years | 17.53 | 3.93 | | |
| Restrictive | 0-2 Years | 8.31 | 2.49 | 2.9609 | 0.0062* |
| | +10 Years | 10.88 | 2.25 | | |
| Principal Openness | 0-2 Years | 525.54 | 124.46 | 2.0709 | 0.0477* |
| | +10 Years | 440.94 | 99.48 | | |
| Teacher Openness | 0-2 Years | 561.31 | 136.34 | 0.8633 | 0.3953 |
| | +10 Years | 525.47 | 90.97 | | |

*indicates a significant difference

To summarize, the new to school group and the more than 10 years at school group were not significantly different in 6 out of 8 dimensions. The two groups were significantly different on the Restrictive dimension and the Principal Openness dimension. The new to school group, perceived the school as significantly less restrictive than the more than 10 years at school group. Additionally, the new to school group perceived the Principal Openness dimension as significantly higher than the more than 10 years at school group.

Core teachers v all other participants.

In order to answer the research questions about how different teacher groups perceive the climate of the school, it was necessary to compare the core teachers (i.e., math, reading, science, and social studies teachers) (N=34) and all other participants (N=19). On the following dimensions: Committed, Collegial, Disengaged, Restrictive, Principal Openness, and Teacher Openness there was no significant difference in the group perceptions. When looking at the Supportive (positive) dimension, the core teachers (M=30.38, SD=6.42) and the all other participants group (M=35.05, SD=4.77) were significantly different in their perceptions; $t(51)=2.7678$, $p=0.0078$. The core teacher group (M=13.21, SD=2.87) and the all other participants group (M=15.00, SD=2.66) were significantly different in their perceptions of the Directive (negative) dimension; $t(51)=2.2337$, $p=0.0299$. It is also worth noting that the two groups had very strong differences in perceptions of the Restrictive (negative) dimension and the Teacher Openness (positive) dimension. The core teacher group (M=10.18, SD=2.59) and the all other participant group (M=8.89, SD=2.63) perceptions of the Restrictive dimension had a very strong difference; $t(51)=1.7294$, $p=0.0898$ and the core teacher group (M=483.91, SD=118.18) compared to the all other participant group (M=551.16, SD=145.07) had a strong difference in their perceptions of Teacher Openness; $t(51)=1.8297$, $p=0.0731$. Table 5.9 summarizes the results:

Table 5.9
Core Teachers (N=34) v. All Others (N=19) OCDQ-RM Questionnaire Results Comparison

| Dimension | Group | Mean | SD | T-Value | P-Value |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Supportive | Core Teachers | 30.38 | 6.42 | 2.7678 | 0.0078* |
| | All Others | 35.05 | 4.77 | | |
| Committed | Core Teachers | 27.88 | 3.79 | 1.3166 | 0.1939 |
| | All Others | 29.32 | 3.87 | | |
| Directive | Core Teachers | 13.21 | 2.87 | 2.2337 | 0.0299* |
| | All Others | 15.00 | 2.66 | | |
| Collegial | Core Teachers | 30.71 | 4.43 | 1.5356 | 0.1308 |
| | All Others | 32.53 | 3.54 | | |
| Disengaged | Core Teachers | 18.47 | 3.84 | 1.4760 | 0.1461 |
| | All Others | 16.58 | 5.44 | | |
| Restrictive | Core Teachers | 10.18 | 2.59 | 1.7294 | 0.0898 |
| | All Others | 8.89 | 2.63 | | |
| Principal Openness | Core Teachers | 467.79 | 114.54 | 1.2499 | 0.2170 |
| | All Others | 507.05 | 100.09 | | |
| Teacher Openness | Core Teachers | 483.91 | 118.18 | 1.8297 | 0.0731 |
| | All Others | 551.16 | 145.07 | | |

*indicates a significant difference

In summary, the core teacher group and the all-other participants group were similar in their perceptions of school climate on 6 out of 8 dimensions. The two groups were significantly different in their perceptions of the Supportive and Directive dimensions. The core teacher group scored significantly lower on the Supportive dimension, which indicates that they perceive the school as less supportive than all other participants group. Additionally, the core teacher

group was had significantly lower scores on the Directive dimension when compared to the all-other participants group.

In summary, the reading group (i.e., teachers and staff who indicated reading on the questionnaire) had the most domains from the OSDQ-RM climate questionnaire with significant differences when compared to the remaining participants (i.e., teachers and staff who did not indicate reading on the questionnaire). The supportive, committed, directive, and teacher openness domains were all significantly different among these two groups. The reading group scored much lower on the supportive domain indices, which indicated that they perceive the school as less supportive than all other participants. On the committed climate domain, the reading group averaged a significantly lower score than all other participants, which is indicative of being less committed to the school and teaching and learning. The reading group scored significantly lower on the directive climate domain when compared to the other participants, which indicated that the reading teachers perceive the school as being one with little direction from leadership. Lastly, the reading group was significantly lower on the teacher openness domain when compared to the remaining participants. This was an indication that the reading teachers do not perceive the school as having a climate that promotes positive relationships among teachers and staff.

The reading and math group comparison had one significantly different perception of school climate, which was on the committed climate domain. The reading group average score was much lower than the math group average score. This was an indication that math teachers perceive the school and teachers as being more committed to the educational processes.

When the special education teacher group perception of school climate was compared to the remaining participants' group perceptions of school climate, there were two climate domains

with significant differences found: committed and directive. The special education teacher group average was much lower on both of these domains when compared to the remaining participants. The special education teachers perceived the school as being less committed to the educational processes and climate of the school. Additionally, the special education teachers perceive the school as having less directiveness when compared to the remaining participants.

The 6th grade only group and the 7th grade only group had a significant difference in how the collegial climate domain was perceived. The 6th grade only group perceived the school as much less collegial than the 7th grade only group. This indicated that the 6th grade only group does not perceive the school as having as much of a shared sense of responsibility among colleagues when compared to the 7th grade only group.

When looking at the comparison between the teachers and staff who had been at the school for 0-2 years and the teachers and staff who had been at the school for more than 10 years, the two groups had two domains that they scored significantly different. On the restrictive domain the 0-2 years group perceived the school climate as less restrictive when compared to the 11+ years group. The two groups also differed in their perception of the principal openness climate domain. This was an indication that the 0-2 years perceived the principal as being more open than the 11+ years group.

The core teachers and staff (i.e., those that indicated math, reading, social studies, or science) and the remaining participant groups were compared and the two groups differed significantly on two of the climate domains. On the supportive domain the core teachers had significantly lower scores than the remaining participants. This was indicative of how the core teachers do not perceive the school as one with a supportive climate when compared to all other teachers and staff who participated in the study. These two groups also differed significantly in

how they perceived the directive climate domain. The core teachers indicated that the school was less directive than all the other teachers and staff who participated.

All of the significant differences between the various group comparisons and how they perceived school climate on the 8 dimensions are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Significant Group Comparisons Summary

| Group Comparisons | Climate Domain | P-value (.05) | T-score | Df |
|--|--------------------|---------------|---------|----|
| Reading v. All others | Supportive | 0.03 | 2.2323 | 51 |
| | Committed | 0.0065 | 2.8371 | 51 |
| | Directive | 0.005 | 2.9325 | 51 |
| | Teacher Openness | 0.0092 | 2.7075 | 51 |
| Reading v. Math | Committed | 0.0325 | 2.2645 | 25 |
| SPED teachers v. All others | Committed | 0.0093 | 2.7038 | 51 |
| | Directive | 0.0464 | 2.0412 | 51 |
| 6 th grade v. 7 th grade | Collegial | 0.0337 | 2.2468 | 25 |
| 0-2 v. 11+ years at school | Restrictive | 0.0062 | 2.9609 | 28 |
| | Principal Openness | 0.0477 | 2.0709 | 28 |
| Core teachers v. All others | Supportive | 0.0078 | 2.7678 | 51 |
| | Directive | 0.0299 | 2.2337 | 51 |

Qualitative Results

For the purpose of answering the research questions, as well as to portray the participants' perceptions in a more encompassing manner, this study incorporated a 12 question open ended interview of six of the survey participants. The purpose of the interviews was to add

validity and reliability to the quantitative data analysis and to the conclusions drawn. The climate dimensions from the OCDQ-RM were used as the themes to categorize the qualitative data. Table 7 provides background information for each of the individuals interviewed. For each of the interviewees, each question and answer were analyzed using specific coding as related to the climate of the school. To illustrate the results of the responses, quotes and high interest words are provided. In the conclusion and discussion sections of this paper, the results from the interviews will be more thoroughly analyzed, and conclusions will be drawn and discussed.

Table 7
Background Information of Interview Participants

| Interviewee | Background Information |
|---------------|---|
| Interviewee 1 | Female, 7 th grade only, math teacher, 3-5 years at the school, 1 school worked at, and 0-3 years in education. |
| Interviewee 2 | Female, 6 th grade only, special education teacher, reading teacher, 3-5 years at the school, 3 schools worked at, and 11+ years in education. |
| Interviewee 3 | Female, 6 th grade only, math teacher, 3-5 years at the school, 2 schools worked at, and 11+ years in education. |
| Interviewee 4 | Female, 7 th grade only, special education teacher, math teacher, 6-10 years at the school, 2 schools worked at, and 11+ years in education. |
| Interviewee 5 | Female, 7 th grade only, reading teacher, 3-5 years at the school, 1 school worked at, and 4-6 years in education. |
| Interviewee 6 | Male, 6 th grade only, reading teacher, 0-2 years at the school, 2 schools worked at, and 7-10 years in education. |

Supportive Dimension

The first interviewed participant described the leadership of the school as “approachable and supportive.” She described the school as a larger school in which is preferred to a smaller school. Interviewee one stated the following: “I feel like things in communication is super unclear.” The first interviewee described supports received at the school, with the following key words and phrases related to the school climate. This participant stated that there was ‘good support’ in PLC, with the IF, and at the district level. She stated that she is “thankful the

curriculum is laid out.” Interviewee one also stated that the PLC was “micromanaged”, and “productive to some and not others.” She felt that it was “top down.”

Interviewee two described the supports received as a teacher at the school. She stated that the “support that she does not need is language learners, where she is told to do this for ELLs and disagreeing.” Also, that she needs “SEAS support because it changes all the time. Interviewee two stated that there is “no HR and like if I had a problem with another person I have to go to my principal and they may be biased to that and then not help me.”

Interviewee number 3 described a poor work environment for teachers. She started by saying, “when they don’t get the needed help.” In reference to the math IF, she said, “I don’t always agree with what he says, but he is willing to walk in at any time and take over or watch or help, and I feel less judgment with him as IF.” She also mentioned the phrase: “knot pickers” and “I think that is seen through our PLCs and how we have a good time and how 7th grade is not always a good time.” “Complaints” was a term used. After contemplating, she said, “I wonder if it is kind of not instigated by a few people and others jump on board.”

When describing a poor work/school environment, she said, “leadership that micromanages everything...from how you are getting content out. I appreciate building level management, but where I get frustrated is when building level management makes sweeping changes because of something or someone above them said...yea the rationale is because I told you to do it...there should be an explanation behind everything we do, every change we make.”

Interviewee number four described supports she received as a teacher. She said, “I feel like I have a lot of support from the special education department. I feel like there is someone I

can talk to in the building every time I need help with something.” She also said, “I don’t really feel like it is equitable, I don’t really know if everybody has that much support.”

Interviewee number four was asked if you could change three things about your school what would they be and why. She said, “I wish we had single block, it frees up more time for interventions, I feel like you have more time built in to meet students’ needs if you are not tied down to that double block.”

Additionally, interviewee four said, “behavior supports ...you know we have a lot of kids in our building that don’t know how to act.” She also said, “let’s let the teachers really support kids by giving up PLC and Primetime.” Additionally, she said, “I like teaching them but I need the time to do it, I don’t think it is a waste, but other teachers she was talking to did say that it was a waste of time.”

Interviewee five was asked how do language arts/reading teachers become more effective teachers in raising student achievement. She said, “smaller class sizes, her classes are about 30, but a few are 20, and that has been great.” She also said, “community support from parents.” Interviewee five said, “injustice with minorities not getting advanced classes.” Finally, she said, “I don’t think we are horrible with parental engagement, but I do think when it comes to our minority population we go above and beyond.”

In describing what kind of supports were received as a teacher at the school, interviewee number 5 provided the following additional quotes:

“Supported with great curriculum and great training, I feel like it is research based.”

“I think both IFs have done great and supported the work with materials, I guess; I feel like both of them are real chill, if we don’t want to use it.”

“I would like more and I have asked this many times and haven’t gotten it, I would like some professional development on what co-teaching looks like.”

“I feel like education often gets these buzz words and then they twist the definition to fit what you are already doing without actually doing what the research says with fruition.”

When describing what kind of supports he received as a teacher, interviewee six said the following:

“I feel like we have strong administrative support.”

“I like the idea of teams; I have never been in that before—being able to support each other.”

“Something that may need a little more support, I know, um, there has been an inconsistency with expectations of kids school-wide and in halls—things like that, and it bleeds over into the classroom.”

“So maybe just more of a unified structure to the expectations of kids, things you can do.”

Interviewee number six described a poor work environment for teachers. He said, “I have been in situations where teachers really felt stressed out, because they felt like they were being asked to do a lot without any positive encouragement—a top-down approach—I would just like to stress there was a lot of turnover.” He said, “worst of all teachers were unhappy and it makes its way down to students.”

Committed Dimension

When describing a poor work environment, the 1st interviewee used the following words or phrases: “lose sight”, “drama”, “outside factors”, “clique”, “pressure”, and “unequalness.” The interviewee stated that “expectations were high for some people, yet low for others.”

The following phrases and words were used to describe the climate and personal perceptions of what led them into education (i.e., what they value as a teacher): “Helping others”, “loved school”, “good at math”, “loved being in the classroom”, “just get to teach them”, “all the little things that get thrown at you—outside factors”, “flexible”, and “extra stuff thrown on you.” Additionally, she described how math teachers become more effective teachers in raising student achievement. She mentioned the “high poverty” and said, “I think we do amazing things for the kids that come in, the kids that we have, to me—it is phenomenal. I am pretty happy.”

Interviewee two was asked to describe the ideal school environment. Her reply was as follows: “I really like the size of the school and the amount of teachers per student in the building. I feel like about the same amount of teachers have the same amount of students more or less in terms of like direct responsibility. I feel like things in communication are super unclear, and not equal. And like some people there is like exceptions for every rule and at some point, there needs to be consequences for exceptions or umm or it just needs to be clearer. Make sense and not just for teachers, but IAs all the way to IFs.” The second interviewee also wanted to add the following: “I have the same camaraderie in a smaller district, like we did the same stuff potlucks this, that, and the other—but there wasn’t any drama associated with it—it was closer knit.”

“Drama” was a word used to describe the current school climate. This is a negative climate descriptor. Interviewee two stated that “here you have to spend money to get something.” She also referred to “making no money at old school, but special ed got paid more.” Interviewee two got into teaching because she loved it. She said, “I love teaching, I actually teach now more than I ever did.”

The researcher asked interviewee number three what is your ideal workplace, school environment. She replied, “For the most part it is a lot like what we have here at this school, high expectations and great IFs.” Interviewee three discussed how she had only been in two schools, this and another. Comparing the two schools, this one was “fast paced” and the prior school was “slow paced.” She added, “I like fast pace here because the days go by quickly.”

Interviewee number 3 said, “I make a pretty good teacher because I struggle, I do the exact same things kids do,” when asked what factors led her into teaching field, more specifically math teacher. Supports she receives as a teacher included: “I will go to other teachers in the department, I will go to IFs, and even administrators for help.” She went on to say, “I think there is not expectations or consequences, they expect us to call and call and call and not want to deal with it.”

Interviewee number 4 was asked to describe her ideal school environment. Her response was “a high-ranking detail would be autonomy as a teacher...professional autonomy; I want to be trusted by not only admin, but other leaders in school, like IFs.”

The researcher asked interviewee four what factors led her into teaching and more specifically, special education. She replied, “when I was in elementary school, I always helped kids, my peers that struggled and I couldn’t stand to watch other kids struggle.” In her

description of what the most important values, goals, and beliefs a school and/or teacher should have, interviewee number four used the following words to describe her response: “humility, grace, listening.” She said, “being an advocate for a kid...I have to do it no matter what.” She also said, “intrinsic those are the things that make a good teacher.”

Interviewee number five was asked what is your ideal workplace, school environment. She gave the following descriptive words: “teamwork, collaboration, and respect.” She said, “respect when someone decides to try something different, and administration that goes to bat for students and teachers.” When describing a poor work environment, interviewee five used the following words to describe: “micromanaging, mistrust, negativity, and judgment.” She also said, “yes, she has experienced here.”

Interviewee number five was asked what factors led you into teaching and specifically middle school language arts/reading. She replied, “I think I am kind of a jack of all trades and master of none is what I feel like, which I think works well as a teacher it allows me to do a lot of different things—I really wanted to be a positive influence on which path a student took.”

When Interviewee six described his ideal workplace/school environment, he said, “the perfect school climate is kind of, uh, everybody working together ...to do what is best for kids. Yea, I feel at this school we have a pretty good culture and I feel like administration is really good at supporting teachers as well as being visible to students.”

Interviewee six was asked what factors led him into the teaching field and specifically middle school ELA. He said, “I always tell my students that I never really wanted to be a teacher because I have a psychology degree. I really liked the school setting and I um like working with kids.”

Directive Dimension

The decision-making processes at the school were described by interviewee one with the following. She said that “decisions were already made” and that the individuals making the decisions “acts like they want your opinion.”

Interviewee one was asked if she felt empowered to make decisions, teach as she sees best, and be a professional. She replied, “Yes, I feel like I can teach how I want to teach.” Additionally, she stated, “but sometimes it can really feel like judged and people won’t appreciate it, but there is autonomy.” Her final statement to this question was “my IF wants it done a certain way it can feel really like micromanaged and when you want to do it your way it can feel like you are going against the district or your IF, when it shouldn’t feel like that.”

Interviewee two described her perception of empowerment to make decisions, teach as you see best, and be a professional. She said, “I don’t think I have autonomy” and that “they will forgive me if my kids grow so much, but in order for my kids to grow so much I have to do what they are telling me not to do.” She also said it was “micromanaged” and “75% I have my curriculum IF on my shoulder knowing she could walk in any time.” Interviewee two also said, “there was just more transparency in years past and more willingness to be flexible in years past, this year the IF is very rigid. The interviewer asked if the decision-making process could be described. Interviewee number two replied by saying “I don’t think our school makes decisions individually about big picture things.” She also said, “I mean why would I come up with an idea when someone is going to tell me what ideas anyway, and not able to make decisions for own stuff, especially money.”

When describing the decision-making processes, interviewee three stated, “Everything has ultimately, it is the school districts policies that have to be followed, and I believe they have some really great things in place because I believe we are an achieving school and we do really good things there.” Additionally, she said, “Sometimes you know scheduling isn’t you have to be a real good scheduling person to make a good schedule and sometimes those aren’t implemented but I think as educators we’re so passionate about what we teach that sometimes we forget that being an administrator is tough.”

Interviewee four was asked if she felt empowered to make decisions, teach as you see best, and be a professional. She said, “For the most part I do (feel empowered), there are teachers, I feel, don’t feel that way.” She also said, “I do feel that way in my little world, I don’t feel like I am controlled that much, I feel I am able to teach the way I need to—I do feel empowered, but not everybody is I don’t think.

For her description of the decision-making process at the school. Interviewee number 4 had many things to say, which are quoted below.

“I definitely don’t love the decision-making process at our building from my perspective.”

“I feel like, that there is a small group of teachers that have a lot of pull with leadership.”

“I think there are just a few teachers that are veteran teachers that have been there a long time and they will come up with an idea the is really great to them and they get approval and it spreads.”

“Leadership doesn’t do a good job of saying this is how we are doing it.”

“Rivalry between 6th and 7th grade...like there is so much arguing between grade levels.”

“I would so much rather administration on certain things just take the lead.”

“As far as making decisions that affect everybody there is just not enough power from our leadership.”

“I have seen many teachers come and go...and some were heavily micromanaged.”

“They were given a script and told to follow this script or you are out and other teachers were not given a script and I don’t see that happen with SPED ever.”

“Our jobs are so messy that no one wants to get involved, maybe a little hopeless—it’s a struggle to reach our kids ...that gap is so huge.”

When interviewee five was asked if she could describe the decision-making processes at her school, she said, “no.” She then described in more detail by saying, “autocratic, but I also feel like it depends on how much clout you have, I know some teachers that can get some things that they want, but not every teacher can.” Interviewee number five was asked if she felt empowered to make decisions, teach as you see best, and be a professional and she replied, “I would say yes, but I don’t think all teachers feel that way,” she said. Followed by, “I work hard as a teacher.” Additionally, Interviewee five said, “In the past two years, I have dropped by the principal’s office just to say hi...just building that relationship, and get to know her better and that has given me so much more grace for when she messes up.”

Interviewee six was asked to describe the decision-making process at your school. He said, “I have only been here for one year, so I haven’t been a part of a lot of decisions, but I do like how it seems to be open-ended in staff meetings or through emails...input is definitely

valued, so I appreciate the decision-making, as teachers we don't feel like the bottom of the totem pole—we have some say.”

Collegial Dimension

The process of how the school brings about cohesiveness and cultural unity was described by the following statement: “we have the SMILE committee that you can sign up and get treats, I feel like that is there to bring unity and stuff.” Two additional examples were “potlucks” and “celebrations” for larger events (e.g., “wedding showers” and “baby showers”).

When describing time spent collaborating, sharing, and building relationships with colleagues, the first thing interviewee one said was that, “I feel like it's not that much, I mean there might be like weekly times where we do something outside of school and then our lunch is like 30 minutes so it's like we don't. Sometimes I won't even see my neighbor like my next-door neighbor for the whole day.” A second reply to the question was “we will hang out like often, since it is like my third year, I feel like I am finding my niche.” She also stated that there were “parties and stuff.” The last she said about this topic was “they do make sure that like new teachers are taken care of, but also, I think it could also be improved because some of the people have been there for like so many years it's like they are semi-running the building too.”

Interviewee one would change how “clique” the school climate is. She would make it “feel more welcome because when I see new people come in, I can feel for them.” Another statement was that “I really wish we could all eat lunch together.” To summarize the changes she would make, she stated that there should be less “clique” behavior and “less drama”, that there should be less “interruptions”, and that they should be “more strategic about planning” for

those interruptions. Finally, interviewee one said there was “pressure being a math teacher, having to cram, time taken away from us is irritating.”

Interviewee two described what the school does to bring cohesiveness and unity. She made the following statement: “Monetary involvement in SMILE committee, which I think is wrong.” Two additional examples given were potlucks and PLCs. She said, “the celebrations that we are trying to do are forced and not genuine and fake.” Interviewee stated, “one of my strengths is relationship building.” Also, “PLC two days of those we are genuinely collaborating” and “in language arts I think we are doing an amazing job, you know we have group texts and very bonded and I do like that climate.”

Interviewee three described some things that the school does to bring about cohesiveness and cultural unity, interviewee three provided several examples. One example provided was the “happy wagon.” She also said, “when they will write you a note occasionally and say you are doing a good job and we appreciate you.” Also, she stated, “math PLC, we talk and we get along—same goal—7th grade is not as good, they are different and I don’t know why.”

In describing time spent collaborating, sharing, and/or building relationships with colleagues, interviewee three said, “I do take time every day and I think it comes through PLCs and it comes through reaching out to the people I need to reach out to on a day-to-day basis and it changes.” Interviewee number 3 was asked if she felt empowered to make decisions and teach as you feel best, and to be a professional. She said, “yes, even though I don’t like observations but even with the principal, who is extremely tough and has high expectations, she will always pull out something good that I have done in a lesson.”

Interviewee number four described how much time was spent collaborating, sharing, and/or building relationships with colleagues. She said, “I do take time every day and I think it comes through PLCs and it comes through reaching out to the people I need to reach out to on a day-to-day basis, and it changes.”

When asked to describe some things your school does to bring cohesiveness and cultural unity, interviewee 4 had several quotes as follows:

“Family night is a big night.”

“Celebrations at staff meetings that is always first on the agenda, and the principal does personally speaking to try to get into the personal level with everybody.”

“SMILE committee, even if you are not a member its goal is cohesiveness, I think the teachers that enjoy it, and like to be a part of it, love it—but it also does a fair share of creating division between the members and the people that aren’t—there have been some weird things that happened with that.”

“Is clique the right word, it can be kind of clique.”

“One thing I was involved was the book study, that was a great cohesiveness for teachers—I really, really loved that.”

“I like the choice on book study involvement, some things we have no choice over.”

“So, some teams get shaken up every year or every two years and then you got that team that never gets touched and you are like why is that fair, that team has been together for like 10 years with no changes.”

Interviewee number five described some things the school does to bring about cohesiveness and unity with the following statements:

“I do think that like team and PLCs do feel this responsibility to throw parties, I do like that better than SMILE committee.”

“It feels a little forced sometimes.”

“I do think we have tried and I do appreciate the attempts to have teacher outings you know.”

“Some I am kind of nervous to go those because I feel like there is drama or gossip...but, I have been to some that were really good too.”

Interviewee five described collaborating, sharing, and /or building relationships with colleagues with the following quotes:

“Collaborating, I think for me my PLC is set up to do that although it has been a struggle the past few years with our new IF sometimes, but our dynamic as teachers is happening naturally, all those things you listed.”

“My team, not so much, like we meet, but there is a lot of tension.”

“Because we have so many meetings, I feel like that is the only time, like if I have free time, I am not going to do those things.”

“The last IF did a fantastic job...respectful of our time and of the conversation that was being had, and were just approachable.”

Interviewee number six said, “I approached someone on my team about detention and they were like what’s detention and I assumed in middle school...still detention was part of it, so

that kind of floored me a little bit you know when I got kids that aren't meeting expectations and what's the consequence and you know there is only so much you can do to call their bluff until they realize you have nothing to hold on them."

"So, team-wide there have been difficult conversations that I may have danced around that needed to happen, um, especially with a couple of members on our team that I know affect the climate of our school because to be honest it is multiple teams."

"There are several times when kids would come in my room already defeated because of their experience earlier in the day...it definitely affected the climate of our team quite a bit."

Opposingly, interviewee six was asked if he could keep three things the same what would make his list and why, he said, "You know the skate nights that we have, or the dances that we have, and all the different things that are provided for students; I really like that. It seems once a month our kids have something to look forward to."

When describing some things the school does to bring about cohesiveness and cultural unity, etc. Interviewee number 6 responded with the following statements:

"I think I really like the transparency from the front office."

"It seems like we are really in the know."

"It doesn't seem like we are fetched with anything out of left field very often."

"Some celebrations, some things over the intercom: teachers of the month."

"Involving students in the decision-making, I know of several times questionnaires sent to kids."

"Principals being very visible."

“Teachers don’t have a lunch duty...I was really impressed with how the principal goes down for lunch duty because that is not something I am used to.”

In response to how much time is spent collaborating, sharing, and/or building relationships with colleagues, interviewee six said the following:

“Two prep periods are something I am not used to either, so we had one prep period where I came from and it was rushed...trying to find time...and a lot of times that time was not protected.”

“My PLC, they are great, I really feel like we have a strong 6th grade ELA, um, I really enjoy the people that I work with.”

“I think we really have similar mindsets about things, that’s really been beneficial to my first year in the district.”

Disengaged Dimension

The description of the most important values, goals, and beliefs a school and/or teacher should have Interviewee one gave the following words or word phrases to describe: “good morals”, “good ethics”, “not losing sight of why we are there”, and “being a good person.” She later stated, “and I can see where teachers who have been there for so long, they can feel like they have a lot more power and that is not a good look, I do think for the most part people have their mind in the right place.”

Interviewee number two was asked what she felt were the most important values, goals, and beliefs a school and/or teacher should have. She used the word “enrich” and then described by saying “you have to be able to work with people, I tell my students, so what, I don’t like

everyone I work with but I like have to pretend or get along like fake it till you make it.” Several other words and phrases were provided as examples which included: “consistency”, “behavior expectations”, “consequences”, “discipline”, “black and white (clear).”

Interviewee two described how she would change the school with the following: “transparency, communication—say what you mean, mean what you say, discipline and that’s it and everything else would correct itself.” She also stated, “it all filters down to the once-a-month paycheck, like I have no problem what some teachers in some areas do, but it bothers me that they make as much money as I do and I work harder.”

Interviewee number five’s description of what she felt are the most important values, goals, and beliefs a school and/or teacher should have, she said, “I do think relationships are pretty high up there because we are just dealing with humans, not computer programmers. Stoking this life-long curiosity or giving them this empowerment that they can figure it out themselves, you know, I am more of a facilitator.”

Restrictive Dimension

Interviewee one described how math teachers become more effective in raising student achievement. She responded by saying, “I think we are lucky I mean with math we can do a lot of like hands-on activities, technology activities, sit down activities.” Another statement was that “building rapport” is a way to increase student achievement. Lastly, she stated that “I think all because of the subject I teach I can take advantage of that, I can get high achievement and engagement.” Interviewee one stated that “it’s nice to have two blocks/periods off”, “keep PLC and team meetings” as she thinks they are “good” and that “you have to make them worthwhile.” She also stated that it is “hard to build rapport with little time to see kids.”

Interviewee two was asked how special education teachers become more effective teachers in raising student achievement, she stated that she “felt strongly about data and growth, and not having enough time.”

Interviewee number four described how special education teachers become more effective in raising student achievement. She had the following quotes in response to this question:

“I do feel like I get to have a lot of autonomy when it comes to my resource classes, I don’t feel bothered or micromanaged by anyone, but I am also expected to do what I am supposed to do.”

“I do follow the rules.”

“Special ed. has more leeway, I have seen gen. ed. teachers be picked apart by ELD or the language arts department for not doing things exactly the way they are supposed to be doing it.”

Interviewee number six described how reading teachers become more effective teachers in raising student achievement with following quotes:

“Yea, well I think that is definitely a hard question, especially for reading.”

“You know we have kids that come to us with such deficits.”

“I think what we do when we teach language arts is just try to improve them some way, maybe not get them to grade level...but to show growth and show improvement.”

“Some kids are being enriched as well.”

“We obviously want all kids to be successful and they have major gaps and so really trying to bleed out our resources to try and get all these kids at least rolling in the right direction.”

“We want to have this one-size fits all curriculum and that’s great in theory, but with the diversity we have, it is just not possible.”

Interviewee six was asked if he felt empowered to make decisions, teach as you see best, and be a professional. Interviewee had the following responses:

“I don’t necessarily feel like someone is breathing down my neck.”

“There is a little bit of teacher autonomy...we have a little leeway in how we are going to implement that, which I appreciate.”

“Class size...27 kids deep and one class that has 21 kids.”

“There might be some grace piled on me too.”

“One of the best things for me is the principal really got with me over the summer and I went to a week-long PD, and that helped me a lot.”

When interviewee number six was asked what do you feel are the most important values, goals, and beliefs a school and/or teacher should have. He said, “I think it is kind of cliché with the whole teach them all and personalize learning for all students...one of the things I always try to do is build relationships first...that is important and I have had a lot of success with that in the past just taking the time getting to know the student. I think it is important, you know as a teacher we have to set goals individually and we set goals for kids as well.”

Interviewee number six was asked if he could change three things what would they be and why. The following are quotes from the interview:

“I think one thing I would change...is kind of school-wide expectations and those being visible somehow.”

“We have had a lot of difficulty in restrooms and halls.”

“Just kind of agreed upon.”

The interviewees’ perceptions of the school climate were aligned with the sub-groups quantitative data results for which they belonged. During the interviews, the interviewees made statements that validated the responses found from the data analyzed from the OCDQ-RM questionnaire. The interview statements were coded to seek similar climate domains found in the survey statements (i.e., supportive, committed, directive, collegial, disengaged, restrictive, principal openness, and teacher openness). Conclusions and discussion of these findings will be further discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Discussion

School climate is defined differently by many individuals. Each organization has its own sense of climate which is defined by how each individual and the collective group perceives the climate of the organization. In the current study, climate was defined based on how teachers and staff of a middle school responded to statements on a 1-4 scale for the 8 climate domains from the OCDQ-RM climate questionnaire for middle schools. The domains consisted of positive and negative climate indices. The positive domains were supportive, committed, collegial, principal openness, and teacher openness. The negative domains were directive, disengaged, and restrictive. Understanding school climate is important, as there are many affects that may be found when the climate is either positive or negative. One such affect would be in student achievement. Schools with positive climate might see higher student achievement, whereas, schools with negative school climate might see lesser student achievement (Johnson, & Stevens, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions: 1) What perceptions of school climate exist within a school with high student achievement; and 2) How different teacher and staff member groups perceive school climate within a school with high student achievement? Two sub-questions were also asked: 1) Do selected demographic factors have an effect on teacher perceptions on school climate; and 2) Do differences exist in how sub-groups of teachers and staff members within the same school perceive climate? Using the data obtained from the OCDQ-RM questionnaire and the interviews, the researcher was able to answer the research questions and draw conclusions regarding school climate. The following

section will discuss these conclusions in more detail and in relation to the research questions. Future research implications will also be discussed.

One aspect of this study that may have influenced the participants' viewpoints and perceptions could be the COVID-19 pandemic. During the data collection processes, schools were closed due to the pandemic, thus, the researcher had to collect data through video chat meetings, and the surveys were completed electronically. These data collection methods may have affected the data collected. For example, teachers may have been somewhat more negative because of the pandemic, which could have influenced their perceptions of climate.

After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, it was clear that the reading subgroup (i.e., those that were involved in teaching reading) had the most significantly different scores when compared to the other faculty and staff groups. However, it is worth noting that the reading group mean was very close to the normative samples mean (e.g., on Supportive dimension the reading group mean = 29.25 and the normative sample mean = 29.39). The hypothesis for why the reading group is less happy or perceiving the climate more negatively compared to their colleagues is that this group has the most pressure to increase student achievement in reading on high-stakes, state tests (i.e., ACT Aspire). Each year these tests results are equated as part of a formula which grades the schools and school districts. Funding is then attached to achievement and success in other areas, but reading achievement and growth in scores carries a significant burden. Therefore, districts and schools focus much attention, resources, pressure, and scrutiny on increasing student achievement in reading. In other words, reading teachers could be carrying an undue burden for the overall school grade because of the difficulties many students have in reading. The fact that the reading teachers are given a prescribed curriculum could tend to lower the teachers' commitment, which was supported in the

statistical results on the Commitment domain of the OCDQ-RM. Teachers want to have some flexibility in what they teach, and for instructional facilitators to play such a huge role in determining content and how it is taught, may result in making them feel less committed. Clearly, the study indicates that reading teachers are experiencing a different climate compared to their colleagues, which is most likely due to the additional pressures, both perceived and realistic.

Even when compared to the math group, the reading sub-group was significantly less committed even though reading is behavior that is directed toward helping students develop overall academic achievement. Similar to reading, students are experiencing lower than desired math achievement, but this can often be overcome while learning new content and skills, and with previous skills being retaught. The absence of reading foundational components, for example phonics to reading comprehension, presents a major challenge for reading teachers to address which could presumably create a potential for reading teachers to become less committed relative to math teachers.

For similar reasons as mentioned above, the special education teacher sub-group also has a significantly lower mean score than the remaining faculty and staff on the Committed dimension of the OCDQ-RM. Special education teachers, like regular education teachers, feel the same pressure as reading teachers because most of the special education student population is required to take the same high-stakes test for the state as the general education students. One difference in the special education student population compared to the general education students is that they are often all behind in reading. Therefore, the special education teacher has achievement gaps to fill for all their students and these gaps are usually larger than proficiency levels of general education students. This is clear when you look at the mean score for the

special education group on the Committed dimension (mean = 24.2) compared to all other participants as a group (mean = 28.58). Their perceptions about commitment toward ensuring student success or achievement is very low, most likely because the gaps are simply too large to rationally be able to close.

The special education sub-group was also significantly different than the other faculty and staff who participated in the study when comparing them on the Directive dimension. The most plausible reason for this difference is that the special education teachers are less impacted by the principal. This is due to their having less interaction with the principal than general classroom teachers because many schools utilize an assistant principal as the special education designee, and they also report to a special education supervisor. Therefore, principals do not seem as directive toward special education teachers because of the additional leadership roles involved in special education.

Another sub-group comparison with statistically significant results was between the 6th grade and the 7th grade groups. The 6th grade group was significantly lower in their scores on the Collegial dimension of school climate on the OCDQ-RM questionnaire than the 7th grade group. These results seem counterintuitive since earlier grades are often times more likely to use teaming approaches in schools. Both the 6th and 7th grade use a team approach, where each team has a core teacher in each subject area, and a common team planning period. One reason the 6th grade subgroup may perceive the climate as less collegial is because their teams have been led by the same, veteran teachers for many years. In other words, the leadership never changes within the team, and the team leader teacher may not be seen as a collaborative leader; this could affect collegiality. In the 7th grade, team leaders are switched more often and teacher certifications become more important to building core subject area teacher teams.

The two subgroups compared by years at the current school were the novice group and the experienced group. These groups differed significantly in perception of the Restrictive and Principal Openness dimensions. The group that has only been at the current school for 2 years or less is likely less experienced and therefore less capable of making comparisons about the restrictiveness of the principal. In other words, it is all they have ever known. Teachers and staff who have been at the current school for more than 11 years have probably experienced several other principals in their career and are in a better position to perceive the climate as restrictive. This also coincides with the principal openness scale, which the 11+ years group was again significantly lower on scores compared to the 0 to 2 year-group. The same theory would hold true in this case. The principal is perceived as less open and more restrictive to the older teachers, who are somewhat set in their own ways and have seen a few different principals come and go from the school. Change may often times be harder for the veteran teachers.

The final subgroup comparisons with statistically significant differences on the OCDQ-RM questionnaire were between the core subject teachers and staff and all other participants. These two groups differed on the Supportive dimension and the Directive dimension of the school climate questionnaire. The core group included math, reading, social studies, and science teachers and staff. They perceived the climate as much less supportive compared to all others participating. Quite possibly, this group sees the principal as less helpful in the pursuit of academic achievement. The fact that the school relies so heavily on instructional facilitators to lead academic support, or even team leaders being the support—rather than the principal as the questionnaire refers. Much of the survey relies on the principal's leadership when asking the questions, however, in the school being studied here, there are other levels of leadership that are clearly influential in the school, which is based on several interview quotes given by participants.

Similar conclusions should be considered for the lower scores the core subjects sub-group had on the Directive dimension. The directive principal would be one that tends to micromanage everything. In this case, the instructional facilitators (IFs) are the ones given the duty to micromanage the core subjects. The IFs are required to run professional learning communities (PLCs), as well as be in on some team meetings, therefore, they are given the task of directing and supporting core curriculum areas. Instructional facilitators are considered to be experts in curriculum, specifically math and reading. All core subject areas are expected to be using reading and writing to try and help close the reading deficiency gaps. The core teachers feel less support, and less interaction with the principal. The principals have become less of the curriculum leader, consequently making the lower-level leadership roles more critical.

Overall, the reading subgroup were found to have the most negative perceptions of climate. This groups mean score on the supportive, committed, directive, and teacher openness domains was significantly lower than the remaining participants group. With reading as core subject area tested on statewide assessments, it is no wonder this group has more negative perceptions in these climate domains. Additionally, when the reading group was compared to the math group, the reading group again had a significantly more negative perception of the committed climate domain. Student achievement in reading and math would be affected by teachers and staff who are or are not committed.

Table 8 below provides a summary of the different subgroups and how they were significantly different than other subgroups.

Table 8
Summary of how different groups were significantly different on climate perception.

| Dimension | Group Comparisons | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| | Reading group | | All other participants group | |
| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
| Supportive | 29.25 | 6.11 | 33.27 | 5.98 |
| Committed | 26.25 | 3.51 | 29.32 | 3.66 |
| Directive | 12.19 | 2.67 | 14.57 | 2.73 |
| Teacher Openness | 437.18 | 124.79 | 538.38 | 123.87 |
| | Reading group | | Math group | |
| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
| Committed | 26.25 | 3.51 | 29.45 | 3.75 |
| | Special education teacher group | | All other participants group | |
| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
| Committed | 24.20 | 3.19 | 28.83 | 3.68 |
| Directive | 11.4 | 2.87 | 14.10 | 2.81 |
| | 6 th Grade group | | 7 th Grade group | |
| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
| Collegial | 29.93 | 4.19 | 33.42 | 3.77 |
| | 0-2 Years at school group | | 11+ years at school group | |
| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
| Restrictive | 8.31 | 2.49 | 10.88 | 2.25 |
| Principal Openness | 525.54 | 124.46 | 440.94 | 99.48 |
| | Core teacher group | | All other participants group | |
| | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>SD</u> |
| Supportive | 30.38 | 6.42 | 35.05 | 4.77 |
| Directive | 13.21 | 2.87 | 15.00 | 2.66 |

Achievement did not necessarily indicate that all teachers and staff perceived the climate as positive, specifically reading and special education sub-groups. Much of the research indicated that there was a positive or direct correlation between teacher perceptions of climate and student achievement. In other words as achievement goes up, so does the teacher's perceptions of climate. This is possibly attributed to the curriculum in which teachers are required to use for teaching reading. The reading teachers may resent the curriculum; albeit, it may be effective in increasing student achievement.

Job satisfaction, which is an indicator of school climate as seen through teacher turnover or tenure, was seen as positive for the school as a whole. As 32% of the participants had been at the school for 11+ years. However, when looking at the reading sub-group, job satisfaction may be considered lower for this group as only 12.5% (2 out of the 16) of the participants in this group had been at the school for 11 or more years. This indicates a high teacher turnover with reading teachers at this school.

With the current reading initiatives in Arkansas Public Schools, knowing how teachers of reading perceive climate of schools is important. School leaders should be concerned about having a unified climate of learning that emphasizes equal responsibility for reading instruction among all teachers and stakeholders. Having all the pressure on reading teachers to increase the student achievement in this area may become overwhelming as indicated by the teacher's perceptions in this study. Their perceptions of school climate might not be so negative compared to others if there was more equality and a sharing of the burden. Unforeseen consequences, such as teacher turnover for example, may become the results of pressuring reading teachers to increase student achievement.

In regards to the differences seen in how veteran staff and teachers to the school and new teachers and staff to the school perceive the principal leadership and openness, these differences may be seen because the principals inherit teachers from previous administrators. In other words, the principal may change over time, but the teachers and staff may be more consistent. The new principal does not get to hire new teachers; thus, they are having to form relationships with and lead teachers who were hired by someone else. This can cause issues for new principals and veteran teachers and staff of the building. The principal may be scared or intimidated by the veteran teachers which can cause a more negative climate perception by both positions.

Teachers who have been within a school for a longer time may be experiencing the school climate in a more negative manner for several reasons, and not be willing or able to change their perceptions to a more positive outlook. The teacher may feel stuck and may stay at the current school for reasons such as money. If the pay is good, the teachers and staff may remain in a school with a negative climate regardless of all other factors. They may also remain in a school with a negative climate because there is no better alternative within the district or area for which they work or live.

As noted in the results of this study, teachers, specifically the reading teachers, had a more negative perception of school climate on several dimensions of the OCDQ-RM. One reason for such negative perceptions was more than likely due to the fact that the curriculum is prescribed to them and they lack teacher agency to change the curriculum and implement what he or she sees best for their students to be successful in areas such as reading. When the district and/or building leaders require teachers to teach a specific curriculum, teachers lose this sense of agency, which can then become a situation in which one accuses the other for lack of student

achievement and/or growth. For example, the building and district leaders may believe in the curriculum being a sure method to student growth and achievement, yet the teachers may believe that they have a better way, but if the teachers are not allowed to implement their methods the teacher agency and autonomy is then lost and the climate may become more negative. This could create a spiraling effect and trend, which could ultimately affect student achievement.

Limitations

For this study there were several limitations that need to be discussed. The first limitation was that there was a global pandemic due to COVID-19, which caused there to be changes made to the methods for which data was collected. The interviews were conducted via Zoom, rather than face to face. Also, the OCDQ-RM was sent out through email rather than given to teachers at an in-person faculty meeting. Another limitation was that the interviews were limited to 6 participants. It would have been ideal to interview all the participants who took part in the questionnaire, but due to time constraints and other factors this was not feasible. Yet another limitation was in the size of the population being studied. In the future it would be informative to compare more than one school within the same district, and even more informative would be to compare several different school districts to one another.

Future Implications

For future studies, it will be interesting and important to research what role the lower-level leaders (e.g., instructional facilitators, team leaders, etc.) have in the influence on school climate. All of the indices and questions on the OCDQ-RM climate survey that indicated a leadership influence of climate were worded as “principal” as leadership. It may be more realistic to just use leadership in a broader term, and not specify principal. Looking at the

reading teachers and staff group more closely would add value to the understanding of the school climate, since the reading sub-group was the most significantly different when compared to other groups. Comparisons between multiple schools within a district or multiple districts within a region would also help in further understanding teacher perceptions of school climate and how this may differ based on multiple factors.

Since the study was investigating school climate within an achieving school, further studies should be more aware of how student achievement is affected by school climate. To investigate this further in the future, it would be prudent to track each teacher's students' achievement. This would allow the researcher to narrow down specific climate perceptions of teachers and tie it directly to the students' achievement for whom they teach. A better understanding of whether or not teacher perception of climate does in fact affect student achievement could be had on a more micro-sized level. Not all aspects of the micro-level (i.e., classroom level) could be addressed with the use of the OCDQ-RM survey, so in the future it may be useful to investigate with another instrument that hones in on the classroom climates and not the whole school climate.

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Appendices

Demographics and OCDQ-RM Questionnaire

Demographics

1. Circle which apply to you: Administrator, Support Staff, Custodial, Teacher, Counsellor, Instructional Facilitator, or paraprofessional.
2. If a teacher, circle all that apply: Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, P.E. Music, Art, Other, or Special Education
3. Circle grade level taught: 6th or 7th
4. Circle # of years at current school: 0-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, more than 10 years.
5. Circle # of schools you have worked: 1, 2, 3, 4 or more
6. Circle # of years taught: 0-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-10, more than 10 years
7. Circle gender: Male or Female

OCDQ-RM Questionnaire

- | | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very Often |
|---|--------|-----------|-------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. The principal compliments teachers. | | | | |
| 2. Teachers have parties for each other. | | | | |
| 3. Teachers are burdened with busywork. | | | | |
| 4. Routine duties interfere with the job of teaching. | | | | |
| 5. Teachers “go the extra mile” with their students. | | | | |
| 6. Teachers are committed to helping their students. | | | | |
| 7. Teachers help students on their own time. | | | | |
| 8. Teachers interrupt other teachers who are talking in staff meetings. | | | | |

9. The principal rules with an iron fist.
10. The principal encourages teacher autonomy.
11. The principal goes out of his or her way to help teachers.
12. The principal is available after school to help teachers when assistance is needed.
13. Teachers invites other faculty members to visit them at home.
14. Teachers socialize with each other on a regular basis.
15. The principal uses constructive criticism.
16. Teachers who have personal problems receive support from other staff members.
17. Teachers stay after school to tutor students who need help.
18. Teachers accepts additional duties if students will benefit.
19. The principal looks out for the personal welfare of the faculty.
20. The principal supervises teachers closely.
21. Teachers leave school immediately after school is over.
22. Most of the teachers here accept the faults of their colleagues.
23. Teachers exert group pressure on non-conforming faculty members.
24. The principal listens to and accepts teachers' suggestions.
25. Teachers have fun socializing together during school time.
26. Teachers ramble when they talk at faculty meetings.
27. Teachers are rude to other staff members.
28. Teachers make "wise cracks" to each other during meetings.
29. Teachers mock teachers who are different.
30. Teachers don't listen to other teachers.
31. Teachers like to hear gossip about other staff members.

32. The principal treats teachers as equals.
33. The principal corrects teachers' mistakes.
34. Teachers provide strong social support for colleagues.
35. Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues.
36. The principal goes out of his/her way to show appreciation to teachers.
37. The principal keeps a close check on sign-in times.
38. The principal monitors everything teachers do.
39. Administrative paperwork is burdensome at this school.
40. Teachers help and support each other.
41. The principal closely checks teacher activities.
42. Assigned non-teaching duties are excessive.
43. The interactions between team/unit members are cooperative.
44. The principal accepts and implements ideas suggested by faculty members.
45. Members of teams/units consider other members to be their friends.
46. Extra help is available to students who need help.
47. Teachers volunteer to sponsor after school activities.
48. Teachers spend time after school with students who have individual problems.
49. The principal sets an example by working hard himself/herself.
50. Teachers are polite to one another.

Semi-Structured Interview

Name: _____ Date: _____

Preliminary Script

This is _____ (interviewer) and it is _____ (day/date) at _____ (time). I am here at _____ (location) and with _____ (interviewee) who currently teaches (grade, school, district, subject area(s)) for _____ (length of time). We will be discussing school culture, climate, job satisfaction, and student achievement in semi-structured manner.

1) What is your ideal workplace (school) environment?

a) _____ provide details and examples to illustrate responses

b) _____ Have you experienced any of these ideal examples (when/where)?

2) How would you describe a poor work environment for teachers?

a) _____ provide details and examples to illustrate responses

b) _____ Have you experienced any of these ideal examples (when/where)?

3) What factors led you into the teaching field and specifically special education?

a) _____ Have you always wanted to teach—why?

b) Do you feel these factors are currently in place—why or why not?

4) What kind of supports do you receive as a teacher?

a) Are there any supports you are lacking or could do without?

5) Can you describe for me the decision-making process at your school?

a) Given most situations can you predict the outcomes of the decisions? Provide examples etc.

6) In your opinion how do special education teachers become more effective teachers in raising student achievement?

a) What can you do versus what can others do to facilitate this

7) Describe for me some things your school does to bring cohesiveness and cultural unity etc.

a) examples of celebrations, norms, etc.

8) How much time do you spend collaborating, sharing, and/or building relationships with colleagues?

a) Could this aspect be improved, if so how?

9) Do you feel empowered to make decisions, teach as you see best, and be a professional—explain?

a) What might this empowerment etc. look like to you

10) What do you feel are the most important values, goals, and beliefs a school and/or teacher should have?

a) Does your school coincide with these judgments?

11) If you could change 3 things, what would they be and why?

a) dig deeper here

12) If you could keep three things the way they are what would make your list and why?

a) _____

Closing Statement

Is there any other information or ideas you would like to share to help me better understand school culture/climate _____ (notes here)

thank you for your participation and time!

IRB Approval Letter



To: Michael Shane Hampton
From: Douglas J Adams, Chair
IRB Expedited Review
Date: 04/09/2021
Action: **Expedited Approval**
Action Date: 04/02/2021
Protocol #: 2003257058R001
Study Title: Teacher and Staff Perception of School Climate: A Case Study
Expiration Date: 04/06/2022
Last Approval Date: 04/07/2021

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Tom Smith, Investigator
