ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNING IN TITLE 1 AND NON-TITLE 1 SCHOOLS

Tamala T. Stuckey, Doctor of Education, May 2019

Dissertation chaired by: Warren Hayman, Ed.D., Department of Advanced Studies, Leadership & Policy

The achievement gap that exists between students of differing socioeconomic backgrounds has been a topic of academic discourse among educational leaders for countless years. Policymakers and researchers have offered a myriad of suggestions to reform schools in an attempt to create better educational opportunities for our most vulnerable youth. However, many of our youth from low-income backgrounds are still academically lagging behind their counterparts (Howard, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Cohen et al., (2009) suggested that the climate of schools may be a causal factor for the low student achievement in some schools.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore if there is a difference between the extent to which students from Title 1 and non-Title1 schools perceive their schools are conducive to learning.

Eight school climate subscales, i.e., effective teaching, challenging and relevant curriculum, high expectations for all students, positive and nurturing

environment, effective plant operations, safety and discipline, meaningful use of data, and parental involvement were analyzed. The school district serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in a mid-Atlantic state.

The study revealed that overall, students at Title 1 elementary schools viewed their learning environments similarly to students attending non-Title 1 schools. However, there were significant differences found in two dimensions of school climate subscales: (1) High Expectations for All Students and (2) Parental Involvement. Both measures were significantly higher for non-Title 1 schools than for Title 1 schools. The results indicate that schools should use school climate research to improve policies and practices to create an optimal environment for all students.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNING IN TITLE 1 AND NON-TITLE 1 SCHOOLS

by

Tamala T. Stuckey

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Tamala T. Stuckey

has been approved

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Warren Hayman, Ed.D.

_____
Sylvester McKay, Ph.D.

_____
Ramon Goings, Ed.D.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One summer in the village, the people in the town gathered for a picnic. As they shared food and conversation, someone noticed a baby in the river, struggling and crying. The baby was going to drown! A villager rushed to save the baby. Then, they noticed another screaming baby in the river, and they rushed to rescue the baby. Soon more babies were seen drowning in the river, and the townspeople were pulling them out as fast as they could. As everyone else was busy in the rescue efforts to save the babies, two of the townspeople started to run along the shore of the river. "Where are you going?" shouted one of the rescuers. "We are going upstream to stop whoever is throwing the babies in the river" (The River Parable).

When I first heard this parable many years ago, I instantly thought about some of America's most vulnerable youth and some of the causes that are hindering their academic success. The babies drowning in the river resemble students who are failing to achieve and meet the academic standards established by local, state, and national educational agencies. The men who came rushing to the river demonstrate the many strategies and interventions that are used in schools in their attempt to increase student achievement and close the socioeconomic-educational gap. Like the old man, I too decided to go upstream to determine the possible causes of the achievement gap. As an educator, I explored students' perceptions to analyze how they viewed their schools. Before examining school climate from a policy perspective, I wanted to

share a parable to paint a vivid picture of how I view the current school improvement strategies and policies.

Background of the Study

Title 1 Schools and Academic Achievement

The Title 1 program, now revised to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), was established to ensure that schools improve the academic outcome for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Title 1 funding is intended to ensure that all students have an opportunity for high-quality education in order to meet proficiency levels of standardized assessments. However, there still seems to be a problem with students achieving at low levels, becoming disengaged with learning, and dropping out of school (Howard, 2002, 2010; Reardon, 2013). Reardon (2013) argued that school failure among students living in poverty is of national importance. Moreover, reform efforts that were intended to improve the educational outcome of youth from disadvantaged areas are not yielding the intended outcome (Reardon, 2013). Reardon (2013) argued that the socio-economic achievement gap is increasing.

Berkowitz et al. (2016) claimed that a negative school climate plays a critical role in widening the achievement gap. This argument suggests that if schools create a positive climate, student achievement could improve among all subgroups. Bempchat and Shernoff (2012) argued that student disengagement and low student achievement most often occur with students who live in under-resourced areas. Many youths from low-income backgrounds attend schools that are not meeting their academic and social needs.

Educators, parents, and stakeholders have examined reasons why some students from low-income areas tend to lag behind their counterparts as reported on standardized tests (Reardon, 2011, 2103). This supports the assumption that many of our schools in low-income areas are in a crisis. Like the old man in the parable who went to see who was throwing the babies in the river, the research intends to explore how students feel about their educational experiences and to determine if school climate impacts the learning experiences of students.

Why Ask Students About Their Experiences at School?

Acquiring and understanding students' perceptions of their school climate has been found to be a reliable and informative assessment of the learning environment (Fauth, Decristan, Rieser, Klieme, & Buttner, 2014). This is important because researchers have suggested that students' perceptions give a clearer picture of what is occurring in schools and provides an excellent opportunity for school improvement. Therefore, analyzing students' perceived thoughts on school climate could be beneficial in helping schools with their reform efforts in the United States.

The Evolution of School Climate

Over a century ago, Perry discussed the importance of school climate and its significance as it relates to the development of the whole child (Freiberg, 1999). However, the 1950s brought on a change as to how practitioners viewed school climate. During this time, a more systemic set of guidelines was established to assess the climate of schools. Elements such as tone, feeling, atmosphere, and setting were viewed as dimensions of school climate (Freiberg,

1999 & Tagiuri, 1968). Researchers suggested that a combination of internal and external experiences form the culture of a school (Cohen et al., 2009).

Researchers of effective schools argued that the school climate plays a critical role in students' levels of academic achievement, regardless of their socioeconomic background (Anderson, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2011). In previous studies, it was determined that in schools that were perceived to have negative climates, students did not achieve as well as they did in schools with positive climates (Berkowitz, 2015; Hopson, 2011; Johnson, 2006). Berkowitz et al. (2016) contended that schools with positive school climates could mitigate any risk factors associated with students coming from low-income backgrounds, which means that a positive school climate can impact the achievement levels of all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background. School climate is noted as influencing the behavioral and academic outcome of students (Thapa et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

To understand the importance of school climate in this study, the National School Climate Framework, which includes the dimensions of a positive school climate, was developed by (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009) and the National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) model of school climate (2019) was used as the theoretical lens for this study. The dimensions of school climate provide a comprehensive approach for school improvement (Cohen et al., 2009). The National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments model offers a problem-solving approach to improving

the climates of schools for all students. According to Anderson (1982), the study of school climate is grounded in Tagiuri's (1968) organizational climate dimensions. Tagiuri (1968) observed that school climate is multifaceted and classified into four dimensions (ecology, milieu, social systems, and culture). Specifically, they mean the following: Ecology (the physical and material aspect), milieu (characteristics of individuals), social systems (relationships within the environment), and culture (values, beliefs and cognitive aspects of climate).

School climate is now considered as a source for school improvement. Over the years, researchers have examined academic achievement, but now, the social and emotional aspects of schools are considered an essential piece of evidence to determine school effectiveness. The climate of schools plays a significant role in the trajectory of a child's life. Researchers suggest that a positive school climate can reduce the high school dropout rate (Rumberger, 2011) and increase the academic outcomes of youth (Cohen et al, 2009; Thapa et al., 2013).

The sections that follow give an overview of each framework and discuss how they are applied to this study.

National School Climate Council Framework (2007)

According to the National School Climate Council (2007), "School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (p.1). In other words, the climate is shaped based on the day-to-day experiences of all students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

Intrapersonal relationships are the cornerstone of school climate, i.e. teacher-student, student-student, and parent-school relationships. Cohen et al. (2009) suggested that relationships play a significant role in establishing the climate of a school. In essence, the National School Climate dimensions were developed to provide educators with effective practices to ensure that schools are conducive to learning. NSCC (2007) categorizes school climate into four dimensions: (a) safety; (b) teaching and learning; (c) interpersonal relationships; and (d) environmental. The meanings of these dimensions are described below and summarized in Table 1.

Table1.

National School Climate Council's Domain and Indicators

Domain	Indicators
Safety	• Rules and Norms • Sense of Physical Safety • Sense of Social and Emotional Safety
Teaching and Learning	• Quality of Instruction • Social, Emotional and Ethical learning • Professional Development • Leadership
Relationships	• Respect for Diversity • School Community and Collaboration • Morale and Connectedness
Environment	• Cleanliness • Adequate Spacing and materials • Aesthetics • Curricular and Extracurricular offerings

Safety. This aspect of school climate refers to the rules and norms that have been established to govern the social and emotional safety of children as well as the physical safety of the school (Cohen et al., 2009). According to Durlak et al. (2011), the social and emotional state of children has a significant impact on their academic success. It is crucial for teachers to address the social and emotional needs as well as the safety of students. A significant and growing body of literature has investigated the need to meet the social and emotional needs of students (Gibson& Barr, 2017; Gorski, 2013). Researchers observed that in schools with a positive climate, students' safety is of the utmost concern. It was also noted that successful schools have systems and structures in place to ensure that there are no obstacles that will prevent students from learning (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Cohen et al., 2009; Lezotte, 2011). Unfortunately, many students are not attending schools where they feel safe. Cohen et al. (2009) reported that these problems often occur because of a lack of systems and structures that promote a positive school climate. This research suggests that students perform better academically when they feel safe and secure in a supportive learning environment.

Teaching and Learning. A considerable amount of literature has been published on the impact that a positive school climate has on reducing the high school dropout rate (Rumberger, 2011), increasing student achievement, and producing students that are able to function as contributing citizens in society (Cohen et al., 2009; Freiberg, 1999; Thapa et al., 2013). Researchers have asserted that schools in low-income areas sometimes present students with

teachers who have low expectations for their academic success, a basic curriculum, and inexperienced teachers (Gibson & Barr, 2017; Gorski, 2013). School leaders should be held accountable for ensuring that all teachers are delivering instruction that empowers all students.

Lezotte and Synder (2011) reported that effective school researchers found that one of the essential elements to increase student achievement is ensuring that teachers have high expectations for all students. In other words, educators must operate under a belief that all children can achieve regardless of race or socioeconomic status. Flannery (2015) argued that teachers' low-expectations are based on implicit biases. The Kirin Institute defines implicit biases as negative feelings that groups of individuals developed based on deeply rooted prejudice that one may unconsciously espouse. Kirwan Institute (2016) argued that classism is a form of bias centered on the belief that individuals from low socioeconomic groups do not believe in the value of hard work. It has been suggested that the culture of classism manifest in our schools today. In some high-poverty schools, teachers have lower expectations for students to achieve at high levels. These biases are affecting many of our children attending low-income schools (Kirwan Institute, 2016).

Interpersonal Relationships. Within the literature, a positive school climate is associated with healthy teacher-student relationships (Cohen, 2006; Cohen & Geier, 2010; Thapa et al., 2013). Researchers suggest that parental involvement is equally important. In schools with a positive climate, meaningful partnerships are formed with parents. Educators and parents work collaboratively to create

opportunities for parents to help their children succeed in school. Parents and teachers must work together towards the goal of creating a successful school experience for all students (Lezotte & Synder, 2011).

Environmental. Cohen et al. (2009) suggested that the physical environment plays a significant role in the academic achievement for students. In the literature, the term 'environmental' tends to be used to refer to "cleanliness; adequate space and materials; inviting aesthetics quality; curricular and extracurricular offering" (Cohen et al., 2009).

National Center for Safe and Supportive School Model

The sections that follow provide an explanation of the National Center's Safe and Supportive Schools Climate Model. The model is illustrated in Figure 1.

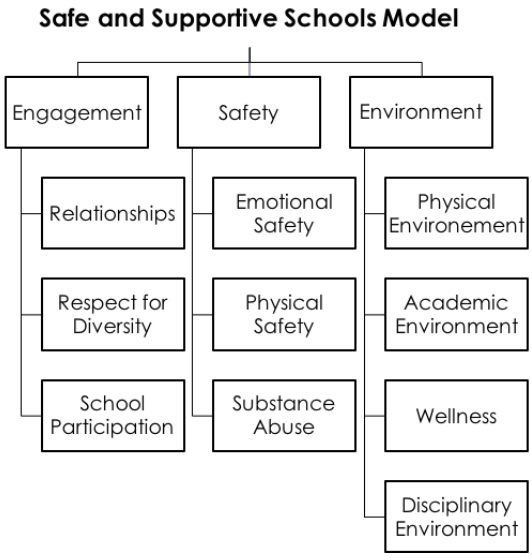

Figure 1

The National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Model (2019)

The National Center Safe and Supportive Learning Environments model of school climate, which is referred to as the Safe and Supportive model, includes three dimensions: student engagement (e.g. relationships, respect for diversity, and school participation), safety (e.g. social and emotional safety, physical safety, substance use), and the school environment (e.g., physical environment, academic environment, wellness, and disciplinary environment).

Safe and Supportive Engagement Dimension. This dimension of school climate is grounded in the belief that engagement is a crucial component of a positive school climate. Engagement consists of positive teacher-student, parent-school, and school-community-relationships (NCSSLE, 2019). Strong bonds between students, teachers, parents, and communities have been found to improve the climate of schools.

Connectedness, particularly between students and teachers, has been significantly related to engagement and academic outcomes, including school attendance, grade point average (GPA), rate of suspension, and test scores (NCSSLE, 2019., para. 3). Consequently, if students do not feel connected to the school, they develop a tendency to perform poorly academically and become disengaged with the learning process. Therefore, it is critical for students to attend schools that promote positive teacher-student relationships, parent engagement, and community partnerships.

Safe and Supportive Safety Dimension. The safety construct of school climate contends that for students to learn and reach their highest potential, the school should be safe. Therefore, students' healthy academic, social, and

emotional growth is jeopardized when they are faced with bullying, harassment, and any form of violence (NCSSLE, 2019). According to Bradshaw et al. (2009), fewer bullying incidents were found in schools with positive school climates.

Safe and Supportive Environment Dimension. In establishing a positive school climate, the Safe and Supportive model (2019) recognizes the importance of creating a physical environment that is conducive to teaching and learning with clear rules, expectations, and norms to prevent discipline problems. According to Thapa et al., (2013), fewer behavior problems occur when clear rules, expectations, and norms are present. Cohen et al. (2011) points out:

> That the environment plays a critical role in the healthy development of youth. A positive climate must have (a) high academic standards for every student; (b) clear rules and policies that are fair and consistently enforced; (c) mental and physical health supports for students that promote fitness, good nutrition and mental well-being (d) a clean, functioning, hazard-free physical environment. (p.3)

Therefore, students who attend schools with supportive environments are more likely to be prepared to be productive citizens who make significant contributions to society (Cohen et al., 2011).

Rationale for Using the School Climate Framework

The National School Climate Council (2007) framework provides a foundation for school reform. The National School Climate Council defines school climate as "the quality and character of school life" (p. 1). Given the importance

of the critical role that school climate plays in the development of the whole child, the dimensions serve as a guide to ensure that students are learning in an optimal environment (Cohen et al., 2009). A positive school climate has been shown to enhance student achievement, reduce school violence, increase the graduation rate, and nurture the social and emotional needs of students (Cohen, 2011; Rumberger, 2011). Thus, using the dimension of school climate as a framework, the study will seek to understand from the perspective of students, if schools are implementing safe and supportive measures to ensure that all schools are conducive to learning. Figure 2 provides a depiction of the Safe and Supportive Schools Model as applied to this study.

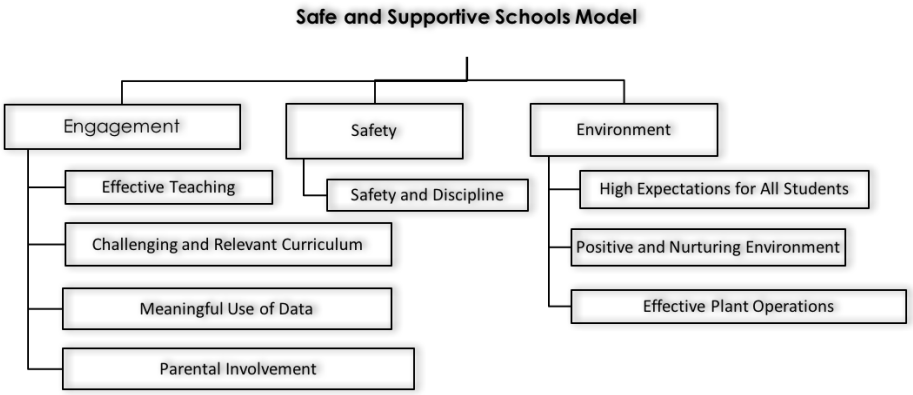

Figure 2.

Safe and Supportive Schools Model Applied to this Study

Using the Safe and Supportive Schools Model, the subscales from the School Climate Survey used in this study were used to operationalize the constructs of engagement, safety, and environment. Engagement was measured using the subscales of effective teaching, challenging and relevant

curriculum, meaningful use of data, and parental involvement. The safety construct was used to measure the safety and discipline dimensions of school climate. The environment dimension was measured using the subscales of high expectations, positive and nurturing environment, and effective plant operations. These measures are more clearly defined in chapter three.

Purpose of Study

This quantitative research study used a correlational research design to explore if there is a significant difference in students' perceptions of school climate between students from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The School Climate survey sought to assess the extent to which students perceive their schools are conducive to learning. An analysis of data was collected on eight school climate subscales: effective teaching, challenging and relevant curriculum, high expectations for all students, a positive and nurturing environment, effective plant operations, safety and discipline, meaningful use of data, and parental involvement.

School Climate frameworks are a set of guidelines established to improve the quality of schools, for students to have an opportunity to learn in the most optimal environment (Cohen et al., 2009; NCSSLE, 2019). The researcher analyzed students' perceived thoughts on the school climate. Research has suggested that students' perceptions give a more accurate picture of what is occurring in schools and provides an excellent opportunity for school improvement (Fauth, Decrustan, Riesar, Klieme, & Buttner, 2014; Soo Hoo, 1993).

The researcher determined if there was a correlation between students' perceptions of their Title 1 and non-Title one schools. An analysis of data was conducted to determine if there was a correlation in the way students from schools with differing socioeconomic statuses perceive that their schools are conducive to effective learning. The study used a sample of students in grades fourth and fifth in a Mid-Atlantic state that has a diverse population of students who live in suburban, urban, and rural areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to address the purpose of the study.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the overall score of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 5: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 6: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 7: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 8: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 9: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Parental Involvement subscale of

the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Hypotheses

Associated with the research questions are the following null and alternative hypotheses:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the overall School Climate survey score between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha1: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Overall School Climate survey score between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha2: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha3: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha4: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha5: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho6: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha6: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho7: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha7: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho8: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha8: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho9: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha9: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Significance of Study

This research will contribute to the understanding and knowledge of the differences in school climate as perceived by students in a school district that has a population of students coming from suburban, urban, and rural areas. An in-depth analysis of perceived differences between students who attend Title 1

and non-Title 1 school will contribute to the body of knowledge about schools in disadvantaged areas versus schools in more affluent areas.

Most research that relates to Title 1 schools focuses on the achievement gap and student performance. However, this research will focus on students' perceptions of the extent to which they view their schools are conducive to learning. Very little research deals with school reform from the perception of students (Howard, 2002). An analysis will provide an opportunity for students' voices to be heard. The findings of the study can influence district leaders to look closely at the non-cognitive differences that may exist in schools to determine weaknesses and strengths in each perspective environment. The results could assist Title 1 schools to identify areas in which they are successful in providing a positive school climate and areas for improvement.

Limitations and Delimitations

In this study, limitations will include whether or not the participants will be truthful about their experiences as an elementary or middle school student. Responses on this survey will not lead to causation.

This study focuses on schools in a Mid-Atlantic state. The school district serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban, and rural communities. The school climate survey provides close-ended questions. This type of questioning provides participants with pre-selected options to respond which prevents the participants from sharing their perspective. This proposed study will focus on students in grade fourth and fifth. High School students are excluded from this study. The study focused on data from the 2017 School

Climate Student perception survey and did not analyze historical data or trends over a period of time.

Definitions of Key Terms

An understanding of the following terms is important to the operational approach of this proposed study:

Achievement Gap: This term is referenced as the differences that exist between subgroups on assessments and performance-based tasks as mandated by the Elementary and Secondary Act. (U.S. Department of Education)

Barriers to Learning: The term 'barriers to learning' is used by the National School Climate Council (2012) to refer to situational influences that hinder optimal "academic and social success" at school.

School Climate: The National School Climate Council (2007) defined school climate as the "character" that makes up the school. School Climate is established based on the actions, beliefs, patterns, and norms of school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Teaching and learning, systems and structures and interpersonal relationships also make up the school climate.

Title 1: An educational act that was established as a portion of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Act. The purpose of this educational reform was to improve the educational outcomes for the economically disadvantaged by providing funding to local educational agencies. Financial resources are provided to assist schools in preparing children to

meet the educational standards established by the state. (US Department of Education, 2005)

Summary

The National School Climate Council (2007) defined school climate as the "character" that makes up the school. School Climate is established based on the actions, beliefs, and norms of school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Teaching and learning, systems and structures, and the interactions of all make up the school climate. The purpose of the proposed study was to explore if there is a correlation between the way students from Title 1 and non-Title1 schools perceive their schools as measured by the School Climate survey.

The School Climate survey seeks to assess the extent to which students perceive their schools are conducive to learning. Researchers have established that there is a correlation between a positive school climate and high student academic achievement (Berkowitz et al., 2015). The School Climate survey seeks to assess the extent to which students perceive their schools are conducive to learning. The National School Climate Framework assumes that an improved school climate should result in improved student performance.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a growing interest in the benefits that a positive school climate plays in K-12 education. School Climate dimensions are now being used to create safer and more supportive schools. The Safe and Supportive Schools grant program was established by the U.S. Department of Education to support states in their efforts to improve the climate within schools (USDE, 2007). Early researchers established that school climate had an impact on students' achievement (Anderson, 1982; Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013).

Research on school climate has been compiled over the past decades (Cohen et al., 2009; Cohen & Geier, 2010). Within the literature, school climate is associated with teacher-student relationships, teaching, and learning, student engagement, safety, the environment and strategies for school improvement. The National School Climate Council (2009) categorizes the climate of schools into four dimensions:

1. Safety refers to the rules and norms that have been established to govern the social and emotional safety of children as well as the physical safety of the school.
2. Relationships focus on aspects of the school that are centered on cultural diversity, students' connection, engagement and perception of school based on their race, ethnicity or gender.
3. Teaching and Learning center on social and emotional learning; academic support and support for professional relationships.

4. Institutional Environment area relates to the physical environment including resources and supplies.

The purpose of this literature review was to synthesize the literature on school climate, with an emphasis on the school life of students attending schools in low socio-economic areas. The main goal was to construct a literature review that highlights the impact that school climate has on the academic achievement of youth. This literature review is organized around the following central themes: (a) improving schools in low-income areas, (b) effects of a negative school climate, and (c) the impact of a positive school climate.

Improving Schools in Low-Income Areas

A number of researchers have explored the climate and effectiveness of schools and their impact on student achievement. Hence, this section includes a synthesis of the literature on the (a) socioeconomic achievement gap, (b) school climate, and (c) the birth of Title 1.

Socioeconomic Achievement Gap. Historically, students who attend schools in low-income areas have been scoring significantly lower than their counterparts in more affluent areas on standardized assessments (Reardon 2011, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Some researchers argued that the socioeconomic status of a child will determine how he or she is treated in school (Berliner, 2013; Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012). Inequities that some students face may be a barrier that prevents them from achieving at high levels. Reardon (2013) argued that, unlike youth from more affluent areas, many children from low-income areas do not have access to equitable educational opportunities.

In 1966, assertions made in the Coleman Report entitled, Equality of Educational Opportunity, suggested that the socioeconomic status was the major determinant factor of a child's success. It argued that school had little influence on the academic achievement of students coming from an impoverished background. The report suggested that a parent's lack of education influenced a child's ability to learn and achieve at high levels. This argument raised questions about the impact that schools had on educating youth. Findings from the Coleman report (1966) caused researchers (Brookover, 1979; Edmonds, 1979) to find schools in low- income areas that were operating effectively so that their practices could be replicated at other schools (Lezotte, 2001). Researchers proved the hypothesis by visiting schools that had a high concentration of students living in poverty. Based on their work, they provided a set of characteristics that existed in schools where children were achieving at high levels.

Effective School Researchers Investigating the Climate of Schools

Effective school researchers argued that schools should be a place where all children can learn. Moreover, if schools operated effectively, they could overshadow any negative aspects that students who come from a background of poverty could potentially face by (Berkowitz et al., 2016; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 2011).

Edmonds investigated the impact of poverty on academic achievement. He stated that "urban schools that teach poor children successfully have strong leadership and a climate of expectation that students will learn" (Edmonds,

1979). He argued that children from disadvantaged areas could achieve at the same levels of their counterparts from the middle class if they attended an effective school (Edmonds, 1979). Edmonds also believed that school-related factors could change the educational outcome for urban youth. After conducting extensive studies, Edmonds (1979) concluded that many effective schools "share a climate that is incumbent on all personnel to be instructionally effective for all pupils" (p. 22). Edmonds argued that effective schools have similar climates that displayed the following characteristics:

1. Strong Educational Leadership
2. A climate of high expectation for all students.
3. A safe orderly environment with appropriate rules and norms
4. Consistent monitoring of students' academic growth

Even though effective school correlates exist, many schools are still receiving a low-performance rating. Countless strategies have been offered to close the achievement gap. Some argue that the differences in student performance are a question of climate and culture that is causing the achievement gap. A large and growing body of literature has investigated the importance of a positive school climate and its benefits of increasing student achievement (Berkowitz et al., 2016; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

Title 1: Improving Academic Achievement

In 1965, Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act was established to improve the educational opportunities for students living in poverty-stricken

areas. Federal funding was given to schools in low-income areas to provide more equitable educational experiences for students (Jennings, 2001; Thomas & Brady, 2005). This law established Title 1 as a federal aid program to support schools and school districts that had a large population of students coming from disadvantaged areas (Jennings, 2001). Title 1 was intended to fight against poverty by funding education as a way to improve the lives of individuals from low-income families. According to Jennings (2001), during Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency, the Title 1 program was used as a platform to improve the lives of poor and minority youth through supplementary educational resources. Policy makers held high expectations for the Title 1 program because Congress believed that additional funding to schools could possibly end poverty by improving the educational outcomes of youth from these areas (Jennings, 2001). In other words, they believed that schools had the power to change the trajectory for students that lived in disadvantaged areas. Through education, youth could be prepared for better jobs that could potentially enhance the economic status of their families.

However, there is still an achievement gap that exists between students from differing socioeconomic backgrounds. Assessment data at state and national levels consistently show an achievement gap between children from low-income families versus children from middle-income families (Machtinger, 2007; Reardon, 2011). Reardon (2013) argued that the income achievement gap continues to increase; students from disadvantaged areas score lower on state assessments and have a higher rate of dropping out of school.

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Act, reformed as the No Child Left Behind Act and now as Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA, 2015), was established to ensure that highly qualified teachers taught America's most vulnerable youth in Title 1 schools. Some of the major highlights of this law are intended to close the achievement gap that exists between different subgroups, improve academic achievement in math and reading for all students, and improve the high school graduation rate (ESSA, 2015; Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Jennings (2001) purported that there has been a consistent prevailing argument over the purposes of Title 1. Some felt that Title 1 programs were too restrictive, while others argued that the Title1 program needed stricter guidelines. Through each presidential administration, changes were made in an attempt to improve the Title 1 program. Jennings (2001) argued that it was important for Congress to assess the effectiveness of the Title 1 program to determine if it was meeting the needs of America's underprivileged youth. At the beginning of the 21st century, the question remained: Are students attending Title 1 schools receiving high-quality educational opportunities (Jennings, 2001)? This question reverberates in the research because students attending Title 1 schools are still performing at a lower rate than students attending non-Title 1 schools.

School Climate and Academic Achievement

Several studies conducted over the past 20 years support the argument of the influence that a positive climate has on the overall academic achievement, school connectedness, graduation rate (Rumberger, 2011), and teacher retention (Cohen et al., 2009; Cohen, 2011; Thapa et al., 2013). Berkowitz, et al.,

(2016) further argued that achievement levels can improve in low-achieving, high-poverty schools if a positive, nurturing, and supportive environment is established for students. Johnson (2006) conducted an analysis of 59 schools to determine if school climate affected student achievement. It was concluded that in schools with a high population of students receiving free and reduced lunch, a positive school climate played a major role in the academic achievement of students. Johnson (2006) reported that students with positive ratings of teacher support scored higher on the end-of-year assessments than students who had a negative rating of teacher support. Findings from this study revealed how a teacher 's support can change that academic trajectory for students.

Liew (2010) conducted a longitudinal study that focused on the perceptions of 761 students. The goal of this study was to measure teacher-student relationships and the impact that it has on student achievement. The study revealed that students demonstrated growth in their accuracy of classroom assignments when they viewed their teacher as being supportive and nurturing. The data supported the assumption that a positive teacher-student relationship can have an impact on the growth and development of youth.

Teacher Expectations of At-Risk Youth

The Pygmalion Effect, also known as the Rosenthal Effect, in a seminal study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) suggested that students performed at the level that was expected by their teacher. If a teacher had low-expectations of a student, the student performed at basic levels, and if a

teacher had high-expectations, the students performed at extremely high levels. This study concluded that teacher expectation plays a significant role in student achievement. In the Rosenthal and Jacobsen study, elementary level students were given an intelligence test. Researchers randomly selected five students. The researchers informed the teachers that these selected students showed promise as students and they will achieve at high levels. Teachers were not aware that students were randomly selected. Over a period of time, students were retested. The randomly selected group of students performed highly. It was concluded that teacher expectations caused these students to perform at high levels. Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) demonstrated that student performance was impacted by the teacher expectation of the students.

Garret and Young (2016) conducted a study to examine the learning experiences of 3,748 kindergarten English Language Learners. The focus of this study centered on the grouping practices of four kindergarten teachers of English Language Learners. Each teacher used different grouping practices for classroom instruction. Grouping strategies ranged from whole group, heterogeneous, and homogeneous grouping. The greatest student gains in achievement were found for students in the classroom where the teachers used a variety of grouping strategies, including whole group, homogenous, and heterogeneous grouping.

Garret and Hong (2016) argued that achievement gains occurred because of the teacher's mindset. The teacher who experienced the highest gain was the one who presented students with a more rigorous and challenging

curriculum. Homogenous grouping was used to meet the individual needs of students. English Language Learners were grouped heterogeneously to expose them to a more challenging curriculum. The evidence from this study supports the notion that teacher biases and perceptions make an impact on students' levels of achievement.

In the classroom where students experienced fewer gains, time was spent on less challenging material (Garret & Hong, 2016). One teacher continued the traditional method of teaching that presented whole group instruction only. In one class, the teacher kept the English Language Learners in a group alone and worked on low-level math instruction. While students benefit from small group instruction, exposure to a more challenging curriculum is exceedingly beneficial. This study indicated that when students are presented with an opportunity to learn, they can achieve at high levels. In the classroom, where students were assigned to a homogenous group, minimal growth occurred throughout the academic year. This confirms that students can achieve at high levels when teachers have high expectations and provide students with opportunities to learn.

Socioeconomic Status and Student Achievement

In recent studies, it has been noted that schools with a positive atmosphere can enhance the quality of life and academic success for students from high-poverty areas (Berkowitz et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013). Students with a low SES background performed significantly lower than their counterparts from more affluent areas (Reardon 2011, 2013). Historically,

conversations among educational stakeholders and policymakers have focused on the relationship among equity, socioeconomic status (SES), and student achievement (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). According to Berkowitz et al. (2016), educational outcomes of students are enhanced by a positive school climate. Unfortunately, Khoury et al. (2004), found that students from low-income areas are more likely to experience a negative school climate.

Berkowitz et al., (2016) argued that a positive school climate can change the academic outcomes for students from low SES backgrounds. Studies have found that a positive school climate can eclipse the risk factors associated with a low SES background (Berkowitz, 2015; Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003; Schagen & Hutchison, 2003). While schools should be places where students come to learn and thrive, researchers found that not all students are afforded the same opportunity (Khoury et al., 2004; Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013).

Teacher-Student Relationships and Academic Achievement

In accordance with school climate literature, teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on the achievement levels of students (Berkowitz, 2015; Buyse, 2009; Cheema, 2014; Chen, 2008; Hopson, 2011). For instance, Berkowitz (2015), using a cross-sectional research design, analyzed the perception of 53, 043 students on aspects of teacher-student relationships. The study revealed that a positive school climate attributed to the academic success of students. Moreover, Buyse's (2009) longitudinal study of school and

classroom climate found that students who experienced teacher-student conflict during their first three years of elementary school performed much lower on standardized assessments than students who did not experience conflict. A possible explanation for low-performance could be that students did not feel that their classroom learning environment space was responsive to their needs. According to Cohen et al., (2009), for optimal learning to occur, students need to think that they are safe and learning in a caring and responsive environment.

Cronose's (2004) longitudinal study composed of a national sample of approximately 10, 991 students further support the correlation between positive school climate and academic achievement. The results of this study indicated that Hispanic girls who had a positive perception of their teacher experienced greater success over the next academic school year. Subsequently, Davis's (2006) one-year case study concluded that the improvement of student-teacher relationships could enhance student academic performance.

Classroom Climate and Academic Achievement

Allen et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study on emotional support, instructional support and classroom organization. The sample size consisted of 643 students and 37 classrooms. The study reported that higher levels of student achievement were associated with classrooms that exhibited a positive emotional climate. This finding suggests that these classrooms created an atmosphere where students felt emotionally safe and supported. As a result, students excelled academically. Lopez (2012) conducted a similar cross-sectional study that measures the effects of classroom climate and academic

achievement. The study consisted of 995 students and 46 classrooms. Results demonstrated that emotional support in the classroom significantly impacted the achievement levels of at-risk youth. These findings further support the idea of the need for students who attend schools in low-income areas to feel emotionally and socially safe in schools.

Safety and Student Achievement

A positive school climate is one where students feel safe. Unfortunately, many of our students do not feel safe in school. Researchers of school climate suggested that students must feel emotionally, socially and physically safe to thrive and grow academically (Cohen et al., 2009). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2011) reported that at least one out of three reported that they experienced bullying in school. In 2015, 15 percent of third-grade students reported that they were either teased or taunted by their peers and 14 percent said that they received physical abuse by other students. The third graders who reported that they were bullied, teased, or taunted scored lower than peers who never or rarely experienced victimization by other students. These results suggest that there is a concern for student safety in many of our schools in the United States.

Moreover, Lacey (2013) analyzed 7,304 student reports from 286 schools. This study reported that student victimization had an impact on students' achievement. Students who attended schools where frequent bullying occurred scored much lower than students who attended schools where less harassment occurred. Students in both high SES and low SES reported that they did not feel

safe in school. Thus, their grades suffered due to emotional distress. The Safe and Supportive model of school climate indicates that students must feel safe in school for optimal growth to occur. Reuland's (2014) study supports the notion that student victimization is associated with poor academic achievement. The findings suggest that school districts and school leaders should effectively implement practices within the schools to ensure that students are safe at all times. Collectively, these studies outline a need for schools to ensure that they are providing a safe and orderly environment for all students.

Student Connectedness and Engagement

Students are engaged and connected in schools with a positive climate. According to Thapa et al. (2013), when students feel connected to schools they perform better academically. In a longitudinal study analysis of student-teacher relationships and student engagement, Archambault (2013) found that a positive student-teacher relationship at the kindergarten level influenced student engagement through the fourth-grade level. Bryan (2012) found similar results in his analysis of school attachment and involvement as reported by students. He indicated that there was a correlation between school connectedness and student achievement. Students with a sense of belonging to schools score significantly higher on standardized tests than students who did not feel connected to the school.

The Process of Disengagement. Research suggests that the dropout process begins with many students as a gradual process. Many dropouts experienced a long period of disengagement during their school career that

leads to them dropping out of school. Rumberger (2011) argued that early school experiences may influence individuals to drop out of school. This research is significant because over one million students drop out of school every year (Balfanz et al., 2012). Moreover, a high percentage of the students who failed to graduate are from economically challenged minority groups (Rumberger, 2011). The recent research gathered from national studies suggests that warning signs for a student to drop out of school can appear at the elementary level (Bridgeland et al., 2006). According to America's Promise Alliance (2018), there is an overrepresentation of low graduation rates among schools in low-income areas and schools that service Blacks and Hispanics.

Studies have revealed that school factors such as irrelevant learning experiences, students becoming disengaged with learning, and lack of motivation leads to students dropping out of school (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). It is at the middle school level, that school disengagement tends to intensify with students attending high-poverty urban schools. Students attending urban, high-poverty schools are sometimes faced with attending unstructured and underserved schools, which may be a contributing factor to students becoming disengaged (Balfnz et al., 2007).

Academic Stimulation. *The Silent Epidemic* study conducted by Bridgeland, et al., (2006) to determine students' perceptions as to why they dropped out of school presented interesting information to help understand the high school dropout phenomenon. Participants, ages 16 to 25, who dropped out of school were selected from various urban cities and school systems. A high

percentage of students reported that they dropped out due to a lack of motivation toward school and the curriculum (Bridgeland et al., 2006). According to Finn and Rock (1997), the more students are engaged and interested in the content delivered in the classroom, the more "academically resilient" they become, and more effort is exerted to complete high school.

Tyler and Lofstrom conducted a study to determine causal factors that lead to students leaving school prematurely. Findings indicated that the primary reason that many students left school was that they became disengaged. The common responses were "Did not like School" or "Classes were not interesting." Kunjufu (1989) stated, "We must help youth find the God-given talents so they can increase their internal motivation. We must acknowledge that children come to us motivated. Something we do turns them off" (p. 74). Schools must become innovative to ensure that each student will stay motivated and engaged throughout the school day.

Cohen et al. (2009) argued that effective school partnerships influence a positive school climate. This view is supported by "Schools can no longer be islands in communities with no bridges to the mainland. Bridges must be built to connect schools, homes communities" (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2001). Kunjufu stated if "we establish a partnership between business and schools, employers can provide scholarships and employment opportunities for students" (p. 79). Drew argued that to "assure the high academic achievement of all children, there must be an active partnership between the school and community to address the social and personal, as well as the academic needs

of children" (p. 65). Drew (2011) also suggested that "most reforms have focused on academics but have failed to make the community connections necessary to address the broader needs of students." He further argued, "Districts must plan strategically to keep students in school by focusing on strategies that go beyond the classroom" (p. 66).

Motivation Towards School. Many students are becoming bored with school at the elementary level. According to Finn and Zimmerman (2012), students who are engaged in school tend to perform at high levels academically. The disengaged student tends to demonstrate low academic performance. Finn and Zimmerman (2012) further argued that a student's level of engagement could influence how engaged a student will be in later years of schooling. This research is significant because student engagement leads to high academic achievement and school completion while student disengagement leads to apathy, failure, undesirable behaviors, which eventually lead to students dropping out of school.

School Climate Literature

This study reflects an analysis of the perceptions of students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 elementary schools. A portion of this research talks about the challenges that students coming from low-income areas face in high-poverty schools. Other aspects of this literature provide guidelines and expectation for an optimal learning environment for all students. The National School Climate Framework that was created by a group of researchers, provides guidelines to assist schools in creating an effective environment where everyone learns

regardless of race or socioeconomic status (Cohen et al., 2009). Marginalized students are always discussed, but they are not often afforded an opportunity to share their views about education. This study will shed light on the perception of students as it relates to their experiences in school. School Climate perceptions were examined to determine the differences that exist in Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. All students deserve a quality education that will prepare them for future endeavors.

Summary

Educational researchers maintain that a positive school climate can assist in closing the achievement gap between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds (Berkowitz et. al., 2016). Prior studies have noted the importance of a positive school climate for student achievement (Berkowitz, 2015; Hopson, 2011; Thapa & Cohen, 2012).

This study is designed to add to the body of knowledge about school climate from the perspective of students. This is critical because so often educational researchers and practitioners share their views on improving the educational outcomes, but many students are continuing to fail. This study seeks to explore the hypothesis that different factors of school climate in school types Title 1 & non-Title 1 may impact teaching and learning.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, the researcher conducted a correlational study to determine the extent to which student perceptions differ between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The climate was assessed using a school climate survey developed by the school district. Included in this chapter is the sampling procedure, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and the data analysis process. A federally funded program determines the socio-economic status of Title 1 schools.

Approximately 13,000 elementary students completed the climate survey. The study explored if there is a correlation between students' views on school climate in grades fourth and fifth. Eight school climate subscales, i.e., effective teaching, challenging and relevant curriculum, high expectations for all students, positive and nurturing environment, effective plant operations, safety and discipline, meaningful use of data and parental involvement were analyzed. The school district serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in a mid-Atlantic state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to address the purpose of the study.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the overall score of the School Climate

survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 5: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 6: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 7: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 8: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Research Question 9: Is there a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools?

Hypotheses

Associated with the research questions are the following null and alternative hypotheses:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Overall School Climate survey score between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha1: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Overall School Climate survey score between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha2: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha3: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha4: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha5: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho6: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha6: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho7: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha7: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho8: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha8: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ho9: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha9: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate survey between students that attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Research Design

For this investigation, the researcher employed a correlational statistical study to determine the extent to which relationships exist among students attending Title and non-Title 1 schools. Correlational research is a non-experimental approach to research that seeks to measure statistical relationships between variables. Correlational studies do not prove causation, but they establish relationships among variables (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). This correlational research design is an efficient way to examine relationships between variables. The following section describes this method and explains how this approach was applied to this study.

Secondary data that originated from a self-reported survey by the school district were used for this study. According to Soo Hoo (1993), student perception surveys give a clearer picture of what is occurring in schools and provide an excellent opportunity for school improvement. Schulz et al., (2014) further argued that student perception surveys contribute valuable information on how well teachers motivated and engaged learners. The results of the study could provide schools and districts with information on ways to improve schools.

The independent variables cannot be manipulated or controlled by the researchers. The independent variables were pre-existing and inherent to the participants. Statistical procedures are used to determine the effects that independent variables have on dependent variables. Positive, negative, or no correlations can be determined based on a study.

The study is correlational because the independent variables are types of school (Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools), which is a categorical variable, which is not under the control of the researcher. The type of school was established by the school district prior to the researcher having access to the secondary data to conduct the study. The dependent variables, subscale scores on the school climate survey, along with the independent variables are consistent with a correlational approach to research.

Participants

The targeted population of students was enrolled in a Mid-Atlantic urban school district that completed the School Climate survey during the 2015-2016 academic school year. The students were enrolled in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. This included approximately 33,000 students. The racial composition of the student population was 56% African-American, 0.20% Pacific Islander, 4% White, 1% Biracial, 35% Hispanic, and 0.29% American Indian. School enrollment ranged from 200-11,000 students (see Table 2). Participants were in grades fourth and fifth from 116 elementary schools.

Table 2.

Student Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Background (All Grades)

Year	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students
2018	African-American	28,973
2018	Pacific Islander	116
2018	White	2,319
2018	Biracial	554
2018	Hispanic	18,114
2018	American Indian	154
	Total Enrollment	51,631

Table 3.

Profile of Schools

Enrollment	Title 1 Schools	Non-Title 1 Schools
200-399	15	25
400-599	25	20
600-799	14	8
800-999	7	1
1000-1199	1	

Instrument

This School Climate Survey measured the extent to which students perceive that their schools promote learning (CSCI, 2012). The survey collected data using eight subscales: Effective Teaching, Challenging and Relevant Curriculum, High Expectation for All Students, Positive and Nurturing Environment, Effective Plant Operation, Safety and Discipline, Meaningful Use of Data, and Parental Environment. Likert scale four-point responses were used for questions; elementary students were presented with 47 questions and middle school students were presented with 56 questions. Students responded by selecting 1 = Mostly Agree, 2 = Agree a Little, 3 = Disagree a Little and 4 = Mostly Disagree.

Students in grades fourth and fifth completed the survey during school hours. The time to complete the survey was approximately 30 minutes. Students were informed that the survey was not a test and that it was administered to determine what students think about different aspects of the school. They were told that the instrument would be used to capture their thoughts in order to improve teaching and learning. Participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential. The School Climate survey provided the district with a clear picture of how students perceive different facets of the school environment. The subscales are described below.

Effective Teaching. This subscale measured the use of effective instructional strategies and approaches to ensure students learn the content being taught. Eight survey items were used to measure student perception of

teacher effectiveness. For example, sample items consisted of the following statements:

"My teacher explains why the subjects we are learning are important."

"My teacher makes learning fun."

"My teacher makes our classes interesting."

Challenging and Relevant Curriculum. This indicator measured students' perceptions of the curriculum to be challenging and relevant to their interest and needs. Seven survey items were used to measure students' perceptions of the delivery of a challenging and relevant curriculum. For example, sample items consisted of the following:

"Books we use in reading are interesting."

"I learn a lot in school every."

"The math that I learn in school is useful in everyday life."

High Expectations for All Students. This subscale targeted students' perceptions of teachers' expectations of students regardless of gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Survey items were used to measure if all students were expected to do well in school. Questions items in this subscale included:

"My teacher expects me to make good grades."

"All students are expected to do well in their classes."

Positive and Nurturing Environment. This indicator measured students' perceptions of the school environment to be supportive and responsive to student needs. It sought to determine if students are recognized and celebrated

for their success in school. Twelve survey items were used to measure students' perceptions of the level to which they felt supported in the school environment. Sample items included:

"Teachers treat students with respect."

"I like going to school here."

"Students in this school are rewarded publicly for academic success." Students' thoughts about this indicator provide a clear picture of the nurturing nature of school viewed through their eyes.

Safety and Discipline. Students' perceptions of the safety and orderly conditions of the school were assessed in this domain. Perceived thoughts about safety in and around the building were assessed by a series of questions. For example, items included:

"I feel safe in school."

"Students in my class listen to the teacher."

"I have not been bullied by anyone at the school."

The five survey items provided an understanding of how students view the safety of their school.

Meaningful Use of Data: This indicator measured students' perceptions of the use of test scores and grades to improve classroom instruction. Four survey items were used to measure students' perceptions of the extent that data are used to inform instruction and provide feedback to enhance learning experiences. Sample items included the following statements:

"My teacher helps me understand why I got something wrong on a test."

"My teacher talks to me about my grades."

"My teacher usually explains how to correct items I got wrong on my homework."

Parental Involvement. Students' perceptions of parental involvement were assessed in this domain. Perceived thoughts about parental engagement were assessed by a series of questions. For example, items included:

"My parents make sure I do my homework every day."

"My parents ask me about what happened in school every day."

"I know my parents talk to my teacher sometimes."

The five survey items provided an understanding of how students view their parent's level of involvement.

Procedures

The researcher sought permission from Morgan State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct this study. After approval was granted, the researcher developed an electronic spreadsheet to record the data. Student Perception Data was retrieved from the school district's website. Data was imported into SPSS and analyzed. The researcher extracted the variables from the data set that were needed for the current study.

Data Analysis

The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistical procedures to analyze the data. Descriptive procedures included reporting frequencies and percentages to provide a description of the schools included in the study. For example, the researcher used frequencies and percentages to summarize the

distribution of the participants(enrollment) by school type (Title 1/Non-Title 1 schools). Means and standard deviations were used to summarize the participants' scores on the School Climate Survey for the measures of effective teaching, challenging and relevant curriculum, high expectations for all students, positive and nurturing experience, safe and orderly environment, and meaningful use of data.

Inferential statistical procedures were used to test each hypothesis. Given the nature of the data and the hypotheses, an independent sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A summary of these procedures is presented in Table 4.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore if there is a significant difference in students' perceptions of school climate between students from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Eight school climate subscales, i.e., effective teaching, challenging and relevant curriculum, high expectations for all students, positive and nurturing environment, effective plant operations, safety and discipline, meaningful use of data, and parental involvement were analyzed. An analysis of data was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the way students from schools with differing socioeconomic statuses perceive that their schools are conducive to effective learning. The study used a sample of students in grades fourth and fifth in a Mid-Atlantic state that has a diverse population of students who live in suburban, urban, and rural areas. Approximately 18,000 elementary students completed the climate survey. Descriptive and inferential

statistics were used to analyze the data. The null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4

Summary of Data Analysis

Hypothesis	Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Statistical Test
1	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Overall	Independent Sample t-test
2	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Effective Teaching	Independent Sample t-test
3	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Challenging and Relevant Curriculum	Independent Sample t-test
4	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	High Expectations for All Students	Independent Sample t-test
5	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Positive and Nurturing Environment	Independent Sample t-test
6	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Effective Plant Operations	Independent Sample t-test
7	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Safety and Discipline	Independent Sample t-test
8	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Meaningful Use of Data	Independent Sample t-test
9	School Type Title 1/ Non-Title 1	Parental Involvement	Independent Sample t-test

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This quantitative study used a correlational research design to explore if there is a significant difference in students' perceptions of school climate between students from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The School Climate survey sought to assess the extent to which students perceive their schools are conducive to learning. An analysis of data was collected on eight school climate subscales: effective teaching, challenging and relevant curriculum, high expectations for all students, positive and nurturing environment, effective plant operations, safety and discipline, meaningful use of data, and parental involvement.

The School Climate instrument consisted of three surveys: teacher perception, student perception, and parent perception. Secondary data from the school climate student perception survey were collected to address the research questions and hypotheses. Based on the information reported, the participants were asked to complete a school climate survey. Likert scale four-point responses were used for all the items on each of the scales. Students selected one of the following responses: 1 = Mostly Disagree, 2 = Disagree a Little, 3 = Agree a Little, or 4 = Mostly Agree. Elementary students were presented with 47 questions, and middle school students were presented with 56 questions.

The targeted population consisted of fourth and fifth-grade students enrolled in a Mid-Atlantic urban school district that completed the School Climate survey during the 2015-2016 academic school year. The students were

enrolled in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Fifty-nine of the 116 schools were identified as Title 1 schools and 57 were identified as non-Title 1 schools with varying student enrollment from 300-900 students (see Table 5). This included approximately 18,000 students.

Table 5.

Frequency for Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	Frequency	Percentage
Title 1 Schools	59	50.9
Non-Title 1 Schools	57	49.1

The researcher analyzed school climate data from the school district's climate survey (see Appendix A). An independent sample t-test was used to analyze school climate data to determine if there was a significant difference in the perception of students on the school climate subscales between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. This study involved eight research questions and their associated hypotheses. Secondary data were collected from the school district's website. The findings for each of the nine research questions and their hypotheses are provided in this section.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Mean Differences for Overall School Climate Survey Score

The first research question was concerned with the difference in the overall school climate score (the sum of the Effective Teaching, Challenging and Relevant Curriculum, High Expectations for all Students, Positive and Nurturing Environment, Effective Plant Operations, Safety and Discipline, Meaningful Use of Data, and Parental Engagement subscale scores) between students at Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the overall school climate score of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha1: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the overall school climate score of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the overall school climate rating score, t = -1.343, df =114, p = .182 between Title 1(M = 91.41, SD = 4.68) and non-Title 1 schools (M = 92.60, SD = 4.82). Thus, the null hypotheses were not rejected, and it was concluded that there is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the overall school climate survey (see Table 6). Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools performed similarly. Students who attend Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students that attended non-Title 1 schools.

Table 6.

T-test Results for Differences in Students' Perceptions of the Overall School Climate Scores between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	91.41	4.68	-1.343	.182
Non-Title 1 Schools	92.60	4.82		

* p-value <.05 was considered significant

Mean Differences for Effective Teaching

The second research question focused on student's perceptions of their teaching and learning experience within the classroom regarding a teacher's capacity to engage the learner by making learning fun. Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha2: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Teaching subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the effective teaching rating score, $t = .021$, $df = 114$, $p = .983$. between Title 1(M =90.68, SD = 5.41) and non-Title 1 schools (M = 90.65, SD = 5.56). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and it was concluded that there is not a significant difference in students'

perceptions of effective teaching (see Table 7). Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools performed similarly. Students who attend Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students who attended non-Title 1 schools.

Table 7.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions of the Effective Teaching Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	90.68	5.41	.021	.983
Non-Title 1 Schools	90.65	4.5		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Mean Differences for Relevant and Challenging Curriculum

In order to assess differences in relevant and challenging curriculum between students at Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools (Research Question 3), an independent sample t-test was used. Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha3: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the challenging and relevant curriculum subscale rating score, $t = .202$, $df = 114$, $p = .840$ between Title 1 ($M = 87.80$, $SD = 5.59$) and non-Title 1 schools ($M = 87.58$, $SD = 6.07$). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and it was concluded that there is not a significant difference in students' perception of Challenging and Relevant Curriculum (see Table 8). The students perceived Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools similarly. Students who attend Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students who attend non-Title 1 schools.

Table 8.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions of the Challenging and Relevant Curriculum Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	87.80	5.59	.202	.840
Non-Title 1 Schools	87.58	6.07		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Mean Differences of High Expectations for All Students

The fourth research question focused on perceived differences on the High Expectations for All Students subscale between students at Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Associated with these research questions were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha4: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A significant difference was found in the High Expectations for All Students rating score, t = -2.146, df = 114, p = .034 between Title 1(M = 89.39, SD = 4.32) and non-Title 1 schools (M = 91.01, SD = 3.74). A p-value < 0.05 was considered significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is a significant difference in students' perceptions of High Expectations for All Students between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The differences are highlighted in Table 9. Non- Title 1 students reported significantly higher on the High Expectations for All Students than students from Non-Title 1 schools.

Table 9.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions on the High Expectations for All Students Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	T	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	89.39	4.32	-2.146	.034
Non-Title 1 Schools	91.01	3.74		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Mean Differences in Positive and Nurturing Environment

To distinguish the differences in the positive and nurturing environment subscale, an independent sample t-test was conducted to determine the mean score for Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools (Research Question 5). Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha5: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the Positive and Nurturing Environment rating score, $t = -1.015$, $df = 114$, $p = .312$. between Title 1 ($M = 87.89$, $SD = 5.75$) and non-Title 1 schools ($M = 88.99$, $SD = 5.88$). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and it was concluded that there is not a significant difference in students' perceptions of learning in a Positive and Nurturing Environment (see Table 10). Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools performed similarly. Students who attend Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students who attended non-Title 1 schools.

Mean Differences in Effective Plant Operations

The purpose of the sixth research question was to determine differences in effective plant operations subscale. Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Table 10.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions of the Positive and Nurturing Environment Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	87.89	5.75	-1.015	.312
Non-Title 1 Schools	88.99	5.88		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Ho6: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha6: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the Effective Plant Operations rating score, $t = 1.428$, $df = 114$, $p = .156$ between Title 1(M = 66.70, SD = 11.74) and non-Title 1 schools (M = 63.61, SD = 11.57). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and it was concluded that there is not a significant difference in students' perceptions of Effective Plant Operations between students who attend Title 1 schools and non-Title 1 schools (see Table 11).

An important finding to emerge from the analysis is the low mean scores reported on the Effective Plant Operations subscale for both school types. The mean scores for the Title 1(M = 66.7) and at the non-Title 1 schools (M = 63.6), for

only 66.7% of students at the Title 1 schools and (63.61) for effective plant operations were lower than any other subscale scores. This suggested that students in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools have less favorable feelings about their school's plant operations. For example, the statements presented in this subscale included:

"My school is clean."

"Our school library has a lot of books that interest me."

"My school is equipped with up-to-date technology."

Table 11.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions of the Effective Plant Operations Subscale between Title 1 and non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	66.70	11.74	1.428	.156
Non-Title 1 Schools	63.61	11.54		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant.

Mean Differences in Safety and Discipline

Five items on the questionnaire measured the extent to which students perceived their schools as being safe. To distinguish differences between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools on the safety and discipline subscale, an independent sample t-test was conducted (Research Question 7). Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho7: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha7: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Safety and Discipline subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the Safety and Discipline rating score: t = -1.326, df =114, p = .188 between Title 1(M = 73.76, SD = 10.03) and non-Title 1 schools (M = 76.12, SD = 9.11). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and it was concluded that there is not a significant difference in students' perceptions of Safety and Discipline. Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools performed similarly. Students who attended Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students who attended non-Title 1 schools (see Table 12).

The means score for both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools were lower than the other school climate subscales. This suggested that students, regardless of the type of school, have a less favorable view of their school's Safety and Discipline subscale than they did for other school climate subscales. For example, the statements addressed in this subscale included:

"I feel safe when I am at school."

"I have not been bullied by anyone at this school."

"I have not been afraid of anyone at this school."

Table 12.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions of the Safety and Discipline Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	73.76	10.03	-1.326	.188
Non-Title 1 Schools	76.12	9.11		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Mean Differences in Meaningful Use of Data

The eighth research question was concerned with the difference in meaningful use of data. Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho8: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha8: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions on the Meaningful Use of Data subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A non-significant difference was found in the Meaningful Use of Data rating score, $t = .676$, $df = 114$, $p = .501$ between Title 1(M = 78.89, SD = 7.19) and non-Title 1 schools (M = 77.89, SD = 8.77). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected, and it was concluded that there is not a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Meaningful Use of Data subscale. Title 1 and non-

Title 1 schools performed similarly. Students who attended Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students who attended non-Title 1 schools (see Table 13).

Table 13.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions on the Meaningful use of Data Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	78.89	7.19	.676	.501
Non-Title 1 Schools	77.89	8.77		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Mean Differences in Parental Involvement

With respect to the ninth research question, the focus was on possible differences in the students' perception of Parental Involvement, a significant difference was found with this subscale. Associated with this research question were the following null and alternative hypotheses.

Ho9: There is no significant difference in students' perceptions on the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

Ha9: There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the Parental Involvement subscale of the School Climate Survey between students who attend Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools.

A significant difference was found in the Parental Involvement rating score, $t = 4.140$, df = 114, $p < .001$ between Title 1(M = 90.20, SD = 2.78) and non-

Title 1 schools (M = 92.27, SD = 52.59). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is a significant difference in students' perceptions of Parental Involvement between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools (see Table 14). Non-Title 1 students reported a significantly higher and more positive attitude toward parental involvement in their schools than students from Title 1 schools.

Table 14.

T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perceptions on the Parental Involvement Subscale between Title 1 and Non-Title 1 Schools

Type of School	M	SD	*t*	Sig.
Title 1 Schools	90.20	2.78	-4.140	<.001
Non-Title 1 Schools	92.27	2.59		

* p-value < 0.05 was considered significant

Summary

The aim of the research was to examine if there was a difference in the perceptions of students at the elementary school level attending Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The school climate survey subscales were developed to gain an understanding of students' perceptions of different aspects of their school. Students at the elementary level were given a survey to measure the extent to which their school exhibited characteristics of a positive school climate. Students' scores ranged from one to four for all survey items under each subscale. The data revealed significant differences were found in the High Expectations for All Students and the Parental Involvement subscales. Students'

scores ranged from one to four for all survey items under each subscale. The data revealed significant differences were found in the High Expectations for All Students and the Parental Involvement subscales.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need to establish a safe and supportive environment for all students. Some researchers believe that the achievement gap that exists between students of differing socio-economic backgrounds can be linked to negative school climates (Astor, Benbenishty, Berkowitz, & Moore, 2016; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2012). The National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Model (2019) and the National School Climate Center (2018) for school improvement provide recommendations and policies that can positively affect academic outcomes for students.

Policymakers and researchers have offered a myriad of suggestions to reform schools by creating better educational opportunities to improve schools for our most vulnerable youth (Cohen, 2006; Cohen & Geier, 2010; Thapa et al., 2013). However, many of our youth from low-income backgrounds are still lagging (Howard, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Cohen et al. (2009) argued that even though there is an abundance of research to improve schools, there is a gap that exists between policy and practice. This research suggests that as a result of this deficit, many school districts are not using school climate data as a measure to improve schools.

In this investigation, the aim was to examine how students experienced learning based on the type of school they attended. This section includes the findings from this correlational study that explored the differences between the

extent to which students from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools perceived that their schools were conducive to learning.

Discussion of Findings in Relationship to Existing Literature

Findings from the 2017 School Climate Survey can provide an entry point for school and district leaders to begin to address climate concerns within schools. The results of this study suggest that educational leaders need to take a more in-depth examination of student data from the perception surveys for school improvement efforts. Researchers have found that including students' viewpoints in school improvement efforts can yield high dividends to school districts (Preble & Taylor, 2009). This argument is significant because students can often give a more authentic viewpoint of their personal experience.

The following questions guided this investigation:

Research Question 1

The first research question was concerned with the extent to which students attending Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools differed in their positive feelings towards the overall climate of their schools. There were no significant differences found in the overall school climate score. However, there is a considerable amount of literature that suggests that students from low-income areas face many barriers that may cause them to perform poorly in school (Hirin, Hollo, & Scott, 2018).

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to determine if there were significant differences in students' perceptions as measured by the Effective

Teaching subscale of the School Climate survey between students who attend Title1 and non-Title 1 schools. There were no significant differences found between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. However, a significant decline in student perception data occurred when they were asked similar questions at the middle school level. For instance, one of the survey items in this subscale was "My teacher makes class interesting." At the elementary level, 80.6% of students gave a favorable rating while only 61.8% of students at the middle school and high school levels of students gave a favorable rating. This finding is significant and should cause alarm because this is consistent with literature that explains why students decide to drop out of school. For instance, Princiotte and Renya (2009) emphasized that having a disinterest in school is one of the main reasons that students tend to drop out of school. Finn and Zimmer (2012) contended that students' social and academic engagement levels as early as fourth and eighth grades can contribute to decisions about completing high school. The Safe and Supportive model (NCSSLE, 2019) of school climate stresses the importance of schools creating an environment where students feel motivated to complete their assignments. These findings suggest that teacher interaction and feedback have an impact on student achievement.

Research Questions 3

Research question three focused on the extent to which students are presented with a relevant and challenging curriculum. A significant difference was not found within this subscale. When responding to the item, "I do science experiments," only 64.3% of students responded favorably. This finding suggests

that students need to be involved in more hands-on activities and active learning experiences that will prepare them for college, careers, and beyond. Hirin et al. (2018) reported that high-achieving schools have a culture of establishing an active learning environment in which students are engaged in learning.

Doerschuk et al. (2016) found that students from underserved areas, achieved at lower rates than students from more affluent areas in STEM-related areas of study. This research suggests that students from low-income areas may have limited exposure to Science, Technology, Engineering, and high levels of math during their K-12 educational experience, thus causing them to have limited knowledge at the collegiate level. For students to be competitive, they need to have access to a rigorous and well-rounded curriculum that prepares them for college and career.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question focused on differences in students' perceptions as measured by the High Expectations for All Students subscale of the School Climate survey. In this study, there was a significant difference found between students from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. The findings were consistent with the literature on implicit biases and deficit theory thinking (Gibson & Barr, 2017; Gorski, 2013). Many students are taught by educators who have an underlying belief that they cannot achieve based on their race or socio-economic status (Kirwan Institute, 2016). Gibson and Barr (2017) suggested that one of the main problems that high-poverty schools face is the implicit biases

espoused by staff and teachers. Implicit biases are unconscious beliefs that individuals have about a group of people based on race, culture or socioeconomic status (Kirwan Institute, 2016). This way of thinking hinders optimal growth and development of our students. Results of this survey should be used to bring awareness about how students view their teachers' attitudes towards their ability to learn and achieve at high levels.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question was concerned with the extent to which students attending Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools differed in their feelings towards the positive and nurturing nature of their learning environment. As mentioned in the literature, a positive and nurturing environment provides an optimal learning environment for students to develop social, emotional and academic growth (Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2002; Osterman, 2000). While the reported differences were not significant, it is necessary to point out the results for one of the survey items. When students were asked to respond to the item, "I feel like I am an important part of the school community," 30% of students reported a negative feeling towards school. Another survey item asked students to respond to the item, "I like going to school here." Twenty-five percent of the students at the elementary level reported a negative feeling about attending their schools. While this study aimed to determine if there were differences between school types, it is still relevant to note that many students at the elementary level from both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools do not feel a sense of connectedness to their schools and do not feel engaged.

Research Questions 6

The sixth research question was concerned with the extent to which students' perceptions differed on the Effective Plant Operations of their school climate. The Effective Plant Operations subscale involved the cleanliness of the building, access to modern technologies and the aesthetics of the building**.** The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is the low mean score reported on Effective Plant Operations subscale for both school types. Among the elementary schools, only 66.7% of students at the Title 1 schools and 63.61 at the non-title 1 schools agreed that their schools have effective plant operations. While these data did not present a significant difference based on school types, it does demonstrate that approximately 30% of students in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools have an unfavorable feeling about their schools' plant operations. Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2009) found that the physical environment of the school had an impact on student achievement. Students attending urban, high-poverty schools are sometimes faced with attending unstructured and underserved schools, which leads to students becoming disengaged with school (Balfanz et al., 2007).

Research Question 7

The seventh research question was concerned with the extent to which students from Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools differed in their perceptions about safety and discipline in their learning environment. A non-significant difference was found within the Safety and Discipline rating score between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Students that attend Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to

students that attended non-Title 1 schools. The means score in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools were significantly lower than the other school climate subscales. Data revealed that at least 20% of students in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools do not have a favorable perception of the safety of their schools.

The Center for Disease Control Prevention (2014) reported that children reach their fullest potential when they are in a safe and nurturing environment. Further reporting indicated that childhood experiences have a life-long lasting impact on a child's life (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). This research suggests that experiences children face in school could have a significant impact, thus causing them to have adverse and low levels of achievement throughout adulthood. Bullying in schools has been a significant topic of discussion in our society. Students achieve at higher levels when not confronted with bullying issues within their school environment (Strom, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, & Dyb, 2013).

The Effective Plant Operations subscale involved the cleanliness of the building, access to modern technologies and the aesthetics of the building. The most apparent finding to emerge from the analysis is the low mean score reported on Effective Plant Operations subscale for both school types. Among the elementary schools, only 66.7% of students at the Title 1 schools and 63.61 at the non-title 1 schools agreed that their schools have effective plant operations. While these data did not present a significant difference based on school types, they do demonstrate that approximately 30% of students in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools have an unfavorable feeling about their schools' plant operations.

Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2009) found that the physical environment of the school had an impact on student achievement.

Research Question 8

The eighth research question was concerned with the extent to which students from Title1 and non-Title 1 schools differed in their perceptions towards the use of data in their learning environment. The Meaningful use of Data involved teachers providing feedback about grades and assignments with students. A non-significant difference was found in the Meaningful Use of Data rating score between Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Students who attended Title 1 schools rated the schools similarly to students that attended non-Title 1 schools.

Research Question 9

The ninth research question was concerned with the extent to which students attending Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools perceptions differed in their opinion about Parental Involvement. A significant difference was found with this subscale. An independent sample t-test was used to analyze differences among the Parental Involvement subscale.

Parental Involvement is critical in the growth and development of students. Kahu (2013) found that when parents are involved, students are more engaged at school. Several studies have concluded that parent engagement has a significant impact on student achievement (Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010; Simons-Morton, & Chen, 2009). Overall, these studies highlight the need for parental involvement in schools because researchers believe when parents become involved, student engagement increases (Fall & Roberts, 2012).

Conclusions

The study revealed that overall students at Title 1 elementary schools viewed their learning environments similarly to students attending non-Title 1 schools. However, there were significant differences found in two dimensions of school climate subscales: (1) High Expectations for All Students and (2) Parental Involvement. The results indicated that schools should use school climate research to improve policies and practices in order to create an optimal environment for all students.

Implications for K-12 Institutions

Every child—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status—should have access to quality education in an optimal learning environment. Cohen et al. (2009) argued that school leaders must be intentional and deliberate in using school climate research-based guidelines that promote learning, respect, and safety. Through school climate principles and indicators provided by the National School Climate framework, school leaders can create environments that are conducive to learning (Thapa et al., 2013; Cohen et al., 2009).

The climate of schools influences the academic, social and behavioral outcome of youth (Gage, Larson, Sugai, & Chafouleas, 2016). The results of this study indicate that improvement in academic expectations, teacher relationships, parental involvement, and school safety are needed for all students to feel that their schools are conducive to learning.

The findings of this study have some important implications for future practice. Teacher expectation has an impact on how students grow and develop in schools. Cohen et al. (2009) suggested that teaching and learning is one of the most critical dimensions of school climate. In a seminal study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968), known as the "Pygmalion Effect," it was found that teachers' expectations of the students impacted student performance. The results of this study indicate that we have more work to do in America's public schools. All students should be instructed by educators who have a strong belief in their students' capacity to achieve at high levels.

The National School Climate Framework stresses the importance of students being provided an optimal environment where they can grow and develop socially, emotionally and academically (Cohen et al., 2009). Unfortunately, not all students are given such an opportunity. According to Barr and Gibson (2017), many students are attending schools where the adults in the building have an unconscious belief that they are unable to achieve because of their social status and race. As a result, students attending schools in low-income areas sometimes encounter teachers that have low expectations for their academic achievement (Barr & Gibson, 2013; Gorski, 2013; Jensen, 2009). These biases must be acknowledged and challenged for change to occur in many low-income schools.

It is critical for school leaders to establish learning environments that keep students engaged and motivated to learn from the elementary through the high-school level (NCSSLE, 2019). Balfanz et al., (2007) suggested that many

students that attend urban middle schools tend to become disengaged with school and are at risk of dropping out of school (2007). It is at the middle school level that school disengagement tends to intensify with students attending high-poverty urban schools. This research is significant because too many students are becoming disengaged in school and eventually dropping out of school.

When students become disengaged with learning, they end up developing apathy and eventually drop out of school. The United States is facing a high school dropout crisis. Approximately 7,000 students drop out of school daily (USDE, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) reported that 11.6 % of students from low-income families dropped out of school in comparison to 2.8% who dropped out from more affluent families. The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) reported that the graduation rate for students from low-income areas is much lower than the rate for students from middle class and affluent areas. Efforts have been taken to reduce the high school dropout rate (Rumberger, 2011). Researchers have been taking a closer look at the climate of schools to determine if school-related factors are causing students to drop out of school (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). With this knowledge, there is a great need to determine what motivates students to stay in school and aspire to achieve greatness.

Recommendations

According to Cohen (2013), measuring school climate is crucial because it provides a lens which schools can use to improve the conditions of the learning environment. The purpose of this current study was to determine if students from

Title 1 and non-Title 1 elementary schools' perceptions differed on dimensions of their school environment. Based on the findings from the research questions and hypotheses, students' perceptions differed on the High Expectations for All subscale and the Parental Involvement subscale. The recommendations are presented in the subsequent sections that follow.

Research suggests that poor performing schools in low-income areas can be improved by enhancing teaching and learning, creating a community within schools, providing professional development for teachers, and increasing parental involvement (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2009). It is a widely-held belief by school climate and effective school researchers that teachers and leaders can change the trajectory of students' lives by providing a supportive learning environment (Astor, Benbenishty, Berkowitz, & Moore, 2016; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2012).

The National School Climate Center (2018) promotes policy and best practices to establish educational environments that create a safe and orderly atmosphere where all students can grow and develop. Unfortunately, many students at the elementary level attend schools with a less favorable climate. To address the challenges identified by this study, the following opportunities for further research are described below:

1. Academic achievement and school climate data should be analyzed in order to determine if there is a correlation between high achieving schools and a positive climate.

2. Measure the accountability of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in Title 1 schools to ensure that students from disadvantaged areas receive a high-quality, well-rounded education. Some researchers argue that schools in low-income neighborhoods are under-resourced. They found that schools that serve students in more affluent areas have more resources readily available for students (Pribesh, Gavigan, & Dickinson, 2011).
3. In future studies, it is important to examine school climate dimensions and the impact that they have on student growth.
4. In addition to the collection of school climate data, different forms of qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and open-ended questionnaires) should be used to investigate the experiences of teachers, students, and parents.

Summary

The purpose of the current study was to determine whether differences occurred in how students perceived their Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. In these analyses, results clearly indicate that dimensions of school climate varied from school to school. The data revealed significant differences were found in the High Expectations for All Students and the Parental Involvement subscales. The results indicated that school climate reform should be considered as a mechanism for school improvement. Researchers have provided a wealth of school climate guidelines that promote a safe, supportive and responsive school

climate (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006; Brown, Corrigan, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2012; Greenberg et al., 2013).

Reardon (2013) argued that school failure among students living in poverty is of national importance. Moreover, reform efforts that were intended to improve the educational outcome of youth from disadvantaged areas are not yielding the expected outcome (Reardon, 2013). Researchers suggest that we use school climate data to improve the outcomes of youth in schools (Astor, Benbenishty, Berkowitz, & Moore, 2016; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2012).

Some of our public schools are in a crisis. Accountability measures need to be established to ensure that an equitable learning environment is provided for all students. Teacher Preparation programs should be held accountable for ensuring that pre-service teachers are equipped with the necessary tools and skills to be successful at providing relevant and meaningful lessons. School leaders should be held accountable for ensuring that highly qualified teachers are delivering instruction that empowers students to take ownership of their learning. Teachers should be held responsible for providing learning experiences that give students an opportunity to explore, investigate and discover their interests. It is my firm belief that if a joint effort is taken, we can transform education in America's public schools for all students.

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Appendix

Appendix: School Climate Survey

Key Constructs of the Survey	Mostly Disagree	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Mostly Agree
Effective Teaching				
I think my teacher likes teaching my class.				
My teacher helps students do their best				
My teacher makes our classes interesting.				
My teacher gives me individual attention when I need it.				
My teacher explains each lesson in a number of ways.				
My teacher makes learning fun.				
My teacher explains why the subjects we are learning are important.				
My teacher asks questions to make sure we understand what is being taught.				
Relevant and Challenging Curriculum				
I learn a lot in school every day.				
The math that I learn in school is useful in everyday life.				
I do science experiments in school.				
What I learn in science helps me understand things in nature and the real world.				
I look forward to learning new things in school every day.				
Books we use in reading are interesting.				
High Expectations for all Students				
My teacher expects me to make good grades.				

Key Constructs of the Survey	Mostly Disagree	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Mostly Agree
All students are expected to do well in their classes.				
Positive and Nurturing Environment				
My teacher cares about me.				
My school principal cares about all the students in the school.				
I like going to school here.				
If I had a problem, I know there is at least one adult in this school who would help me.				
Teachers treat students with respect.				
Students show respect for the teachers in this school.				
My teacher often says positive things to me.				
My school principal takes time to talk to students.				
I feel like I am an important part of the school community.				
The principal often greets students when we are arriving for the day.				
Students in this school are rewarded or recognized publicly for good behavior.				
Students in this school are rewarded or recognized publicly for academic success.				
Effective Plant Operations				
My school is clean.				
The bathroom at my school is clean.				
The school books we use are in good condition.				
Our school library has a lot of books that interest me.				

Key Constructs of the Survey	Mostly Disagree	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Mostly Agree
My school is equipped with up-to-date technology.				
Safety and Discipline				
I feel safe when I am in school.				
Students in my class listen to the teacher.				
I have NOT been bullied by anyone at this school.				
This school is a safe place to be.				
I have NOT been afraid of anyone in this school.				
Meaningful Use of Data				
My teacher helps me understand why I got something wrong on a test.				
My teacher makes comments on my homework to help me improve.				
My teacher talks to me about my grades				
My teacher usually explains how to correct items I got wrong on my homework.				
Parental Engagement				
My parents make sure I do my homework every day.				
My parents check my homework every day.				
My parents ask me about what happened in school every day.				
My parents make sure I am on time for school each day.				
I know my parents talk to my teacher sometimes.				