SCHOOL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO BEHAVIORS

OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

Lori Y. Brown

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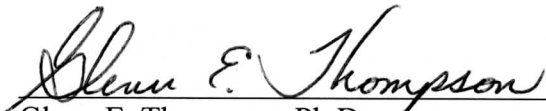College of Education

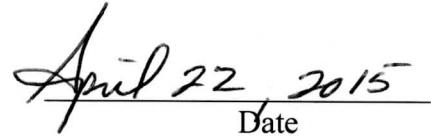Frostburg State University

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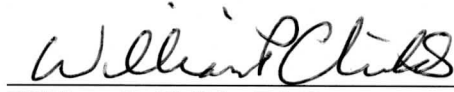
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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the College of Education, have examined and approved this dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Abstract

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This descriptive study attempts to increase understanding of relationships between school contextual factors and the fostering of student prosocial development and reduced at risk behaviors among adolescent populations. Using an ethnographic design, the researcher gathered data from six rural public middle schools in Pennsylvania. Three schools with the greatest number of infractions and three with the fewest infractions per 100 eighth grade students represented both ends of the misconduct range and served as the study's sample. Data were gathered through school site visits, primary documents, interviews of school personnel, and an on-line survey completed by each school faculty. All instruments were informed by subscale dimensions represented by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI).

Cross-case analysis revealed shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language of middle school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers concerning factors contributing to their respective school climates. Contextual similarities and differences among school groupings were investigated through subscale dimensions of (a) faculty relations, (b) leadership and decision making, (c) discipline and management environment, and (d) attitude and culture. A paired-samples t-test of survey data revealed statistically significant mean differences for (a) leadership and decision making and (b)

attitude and culture, with these variances being particularly evident after removing one school that emerged as an outlier. Data gathered from the study's other instruments aligned with this school's incongruous nature to all other schools of the sample.

Keywords: Contextual factors, student behavior, at risk behavior, asocial behavior, middle school environments

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Statement of the Problem

As a democratic society, even during early days of our nation's infancy, leaders

wrestled with innumerable issues that had impact on the newly found republic's citizens.

One such issue woven as a critical thread within America's educational context was

character education, and it rested at the forefront of political, social, and economic

discussions. The inception of educating character surfaced struggles for power and

egalitarianism mixed with struggles of pedagogy and content. Whether through ideas of

Horace Mann or Benjamin Franklin, President Reagan or John Locke, educating

character has continued to be directly associated with the nation's foundational principles

but also has been viewed nearly as a tide, coming in and going out, often vacillating to

the political, religious, or corporate societal pressures of the day (Watz, 2011). As a

result, approaches to promoting character development also have covered a range of

democratic ideals, mostly developed to help students "know, care about, and do the right

thing" (Howard, Berkowitz, & Schaeffer, 2004, p. 210). In its rudimentary form,

character comprises the choices, attitudes, and behaviors one exhibits—whether someone

is watching, or not. When viewed on a horizontal plane, the social constructs of character

and its subsequent behavioral components always have been part of the roots and

foundation of the American educational landscape (Watz, 2011).

In terms of public school settings, character has represented cognitive, affective,

and behavioral objectives designed to teach children in a manner that would enable them

to be, as society defines, "good people." Realizing the vital role character and the

education of it have played in the life of our democratic nation, federal, state, and local

governments have continued to face an on-going conundrum: Who is in charge of educating character and how should it be taught? Is it a concern solely of the home, or is it an obligation of society? Is it found in Kohlberg's stages of moral development, or is it validated through strategies of values classification? Regardless, for today's adolescents who are maturing in a world of complex challenges, making positive decisions and developing constructive mindsets and conduct becomes an unprecedented challenge. Since April 20, 1999, when two teenage males opened fire at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, the nation began to view behavior of its citizens, and particularly that of youngsters, differently. School settings became places to monitor and study more closely in an effort to find answers and solutions for asocial and at risk behaviors being elicited by the nation's adolescent clientele.

Purpose of the Study

Establishing a healthy school climate continues to be viewed as an essential element for promoting safe schools as well as an important bridge for fostering positive youth development. This descriptive study explored middle school contextual factors to determine what attributes of some rural school environments may influence student behavior. While traditional forms of school climate assessment typically are characterized by objective survey-type inventories, this exploratory field research additionally occurred within school environments to study behavior as it happens in a natural setting (McMillan, 2008).

Significance of the Study

When the American public questions the behavior of its citizens and places causes of problems under the microscope of scrutiny, character education becomes a revisited

implication for public schools. And while roles and rights of schools to educate students in areas of ethics, values, or morals often present points of contention, the federal government continues to advocate the education of its citizenry; responsible citizens are foundational stones of a lasting democracy. Not surprisingly, K-12 public school students often are the targeted audience of such thought. Today's learners become tomorrow's functioning citizens.

According to a national Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted in public and private schools throughout the United States by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) from 1991-2011, risk behavior trends contributing to violence of ninth through twelfth grade students have shown no change or have decreased over this 20-year period (Eaton et. al, 2012). Yet when categories of the 2011 national survey results were converted to percentages of adolescent population affected, the perspective of contributing impact changed. In fact, data revealed more pragmatic concerns. Of those students ages 14 to 18, 17% had carried a weapon (e.g., a gun, knife, or club) on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey, 5% had carried a gun, and almost 6% had not gone to school on at least one day because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Another 16% had been electronically bullied (including being bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, web sites, or texting) during the 12 months before the survey, 20% had been bullied on school property, 16% had seriously considered attempting suicide, and grimmer yet, 8% had attempted suicide one or more times (Eaton et. al, 2012).

While mixed interpretations exist concerning the role teaching character should have in public education and the role government should have in its development, history

reminds us character always has been "both a formal and informal part of schools" (Watz, 2011, p. 34). Whether integrated as part of school curricula, experienced as supplemental or external activities, or naturally occurring within school settings, educating character has served as one means by which society transmits its democratic ideals and socially accepted behaviors to the next generation. The desired outcome is a culmination of constructive thoughts and actions, whether students are making decisions in classrooms, at home, or within communities. For many adolescents faced with challenging home and community settings, this intrinsic learning may be acquired in the school environment or not at all.

Accordingly, this research explored school environments, specifically middle school environments, to increase understanding of relationships between school contextual factors and the fostering of student prosocial development and reduced at risk behavior. While numerous studies have addressed correlations between school climate attributes and academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012), holding adolescents accountable for academic achievement alone will not mitigate or minimize asocial and harmful behaviors occurring daily in many of the nation's schools. Furthermore, results of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's national Youth Risk Behavior Survey report reflected samplings across every demographic population of the nation, and results showed no geographic area was without forms of asocial and at risk behaviors among adolescent populations. In addition, many destructive "behaviors frequently are interrelated and are established during childhood and adolescence and extend into adulthood" (Eaton et al., 2012, p. 2). Therefore, a systematic study designed to find the

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best means of addressing adolescents' asocial and at risk behaviors in public school environments is critical to a peaceful and harmonious society at large.

Current federal education policy invites schools, families, and community non-profit organizations to actively engage in supporting roles for student success in local school districts, individual schools, and surrounding communities. One key priority set forth by such policy is to promote innovation for fostering successful, safe, and healthy students—including the premise that "students most at risk for academic failure too often attend schools and live in communities with insufficient capacity to address the full range of their needs" (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2010a, p. 31). Most studies, however, remain focused on correlations between environment and academic achievement. Unfortunately, an increasingly higher number of students today exhibit behavioral challenges in public school settings, and many find themselves reacting negatively toward situations instead of enacting positive character traits toward such challenges (Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012).

The current study, exploring middle school contextual factors, attempted to determine what attributes of some rural school environments may influence adolescents to not engage in at risk and asocial behaviors in hopes that such attributes of similar schools might be enhanced or developed more fully, while attributes contributing to such behaviors might be minimized or mitigated. For public schools, results of this study are relevant. Educating students includes not only establishing academic and extracurricular programs but also creating environments to help them internalize essential knowledge sets and behaviors aimed at increasing their social-emotional awareness and resulting subsequent behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

Behavior occurs within a context, and for public school students, one such context is the school environment. On average, American students spend approximately 20% of their waking time in school. As such, what occurs within school environments serves as a major influence on children's academic, emotional, and social development. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory suggests that throughout their lives, humans encounter different environments—coined microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems—that influence behavior in varying degrees. These environmental systems form a type of nested dialectic between the developing person and his/her environment.

For maturing adolescents "in context," one of their strongest environments is the school setting, representing what Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined as a microsystem. He referenced this system as "the complex of relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). For this component within the ecological systems paradigm, setting includes factors of place, time, physical features, activity, participant, and role. Interactions within such a microsystem, occurring regularly over extended periods of time, establish enduring patterns of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2008). While such forms of interaction within the immediate environment of a person's microsystem produce and sustain development through deeply formed relational bonds, "their power to do so depends on the content and structure of the microsystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 2008, p. 16). For students, the immediate setting of the school environment—including its physical, social, and emotional factors—represents a crucial context for the conceptualization and

development of behavior.

Research Design Overview

Conducting a descriptive study, the researcher used an ethnographic design to explore contextual factors of rural, public middle schools to determine what attributes of school environments may influence behaviors of adolescents. In order to provide insight into middle school environments and their influence on student behavior, the researcher conducted a collective case study and performed cross-case analysis using schools from both ends of the misconduct range. Exploration of multiple cases in rural school districts of Pennsylvania was anticipated to expose shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language of middle school administrators and teachers concerning factors contributing to their respective school climates (Creswell, 2008).

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to disclose factors found in the context of rural middle school environments with respect to their likely influences on student behavior. While studies have explored correlations between school environments and student learning, fewer have addressed associations between school environments and student behavior (Brookmeyer, Fanti, & Heinrich, 2006; Greenberg et al., 2003; Johnson, 2009; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997; Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). As such, this qualitative study sought to explore and understand the following central phenomenon: What patterns of school contextual factors appear to influence behaviors of middle school students?

Assumptions

The basis of qualitative research investigates the how and why of decision-

making. Therefore, the study's qualitative design, investigating reasons behind various aspects of student behavior, assumed that relationships between contextual factors of school environments and student behavior exist. Many other variables within the school context (e.g., peer groups and parental values) might influence student behavior. Therefore, this study's results could reveal one of more than several indicators concerning what truly impacts student behavior.

Limitations

The study was limited to public middle schools of rural districts. By exploring specific attributes of rural middle school environments, findings may not be generalizable to different settings, such as urban environments. Subsequently, these findings also may not be transferrable to other school levels, such as elementary or high school.

Delimitations

The study's population was derived using state collected violence reports on misconduct behaviors for eighth grade students. Studying this population was critical on two fronts. First, eighth grade students rest at the pinnacle position of their middle school experiences. As such, they have received more probable influence of school environments than their younger peers. In addition, eighth graders experience a year of tremendous transitions physically, emotionally, and socially. About to embark on the high school experience, these students represent an area of critical need for understanding what impacts their behavior.

Rural middle schools, which made up the population to be sampled, were selected because they (a) had grade configurations commonly associated with the definition of a middle school (e.g., 05-08, 06-08, or 07-08) and (b) were housed within stand-alone

buildings. These constraints assisted in minimizing influences both younger and older peers may have on behaviors elicited by middle school students.

Definitions

Asocial behavior: behavior that is indifferent to or averse to conforming to conventional standards of behavior (e.g., being inconsiderate of others, selfish, or egocentric)

At risk behavior: any behavior that puts someone at risk for negative consequences, like future poor health, injury, or death

Character: the choices, attitudes, and behaviors one exhibits—whether someone is watching, or not

Contextual factors: attributes or conditions deriving from structural or social characteristics of an environment that can influence behavior

Prosocial behavior: any voluntary behavior made with the intention of benefiting others: volunteering, providing instrumental or costly help, and emotionally supporting others

Organization of the Study

Chapter One contains an introduction to the topic, the problem statement, purpose, research questions, definitions, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study. Chapter Two summarizes relevant literature on character and behavior, including concept origins, developmental stages of children and their character development, and influences of school contextual factors on students and their behavior. Chapter Three describes the research design employed in the study and includes a description of the sample, the instruments used, data collection and analysis techniques, validity and

reliability risks, and ethical protection of participants. Chapter Four provides an analysis

of data and findings. Chapter Five provides a summary of learning and understanding of

findings, which will include recommendations for practice and subsequent research.

Chapter 2 – Review of Related Literature

Dr. Martin Luther King (1947) stated, "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education" (para. 6). As collective learning communities, public schools recognize the importance of having safe, orderly, and caring environments where students have opportunities to grow intellectually. These same systems realize their influence does not stop with dissemination of academic content. Schools also face increasingly diverse and paramount tasks of supporting students' character development, helping them mature into respectful and responsible adults.

Character encapsulates the emotional, intellectual, and moral qualities of a person or group as well as the demonstration of these qualities in prosocial behavior. The inclusive term carries with it a predisposed set of philosophical beliefs and values based upon the nature of both individual and collective groups of stakeholders in their respective contexts. Is educating character really needed in today's schools? If so, who defines it? What are curricular and programmatic implications for its implementation? Questions like these drive even the most basic approaches to addressing student behavior in public school settings.

Ethos, Character, and Moral Behavior

For the Greeks, ethos was a paramount sentiment or attitude displayed in thoughts and actions of the culture's citizens. Deriving from the root "to mark," the term refers to those dispositions engraved as habits, virtues, and even vices. The Greeks employed this meaning as their unspoken standard of behavior, an outworking of their internalized truths. Aristotle, following both Socrates and Plato, regarded similar ethical virtues "as complex rational, emotional and social skills" that "cannot be acquired solely by learning

general rules" (Kraut, 2012, para. 1). In the ancient world, ethos (i.e., character) existed as a guiding ideology for the well-being of individuals, communities, and even nations.

In the 1300s, the word *moral* originated from Old French, meaning "pertaining to character or temperament," and from Latin *moralis*, referring to "proper behavior of a person in society" (Moral, 2014, para. 1). Although having varied meanings and being socially debated for centuries, the term established a description for society's basis of character in action (i.e., codes or customs people define for how they live and act together, as well as conduct and practices resulting from such acquired habits).

Age of Enlightenment

During the Age of Enlightenment, the topic of character in 17th century Europe shifted from coinciding solely with religious morality to becoming a more secular obligation of mankind. Consequently, character became a more formal vision of educational philosophy. In France, Minister of Education Jules François Camille Ferry argued for the use of morals in education, supporting character development as essential for the student body while not overtly emphasizing religious teachings (Watz, 2011). Suddenly, teachers found themselves not only as models of character-building traits but also as deliverers of curricular mandates.

Naturally, this "enlightened" morality began to rest at the forefront of Western culture and philosophy. Early American leaders eventually promoted such ideals of character, which became evident in many of America's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Notably, Horace Mann warned that "in the absence of morality, the character of students would not fully develop and, presumably, negative effects such as undesirable behavior and decreasing academics

would occur" (Watz, 2011, p. 37).

Early American Settlement

At this early stage of America's foundation, character already was an anchored cornerstone. While America's founders generally viewed character as important to a blossoming republic, defining it and, subsequently, educating it presented on-going challenges to American society. During the early days of American settlement, broadly accessible education was desired, but the means for implementing various facets of it were more restrained. Society educated through family, church, and community. As settlements expanded and the social structure of society became a dichotomy of the haves and have-nots, the nation's early fathers struggled with thoughts of a newborn republic facing possible anarchy. While control and order became sensitive issues (many disagreeing over the idea of the state educating through schools), resting the power of government in the hands of educated citizens was essential for protection of not only the nation but also the individual. In 1797, newspaper editor Samuel Harrison Smith stated, "An enlightened nation is always most tenacious of its rights" (Kaestle, 1983, p. 7). For many during the early years of the republic, enlightenment as a result of education was thought to produce sound citizens of virtuous character who would stimulate national growth and unity.

Throughout the early colonial period, education was home-centered and, therefore, reflected beliefs and values of the Puritan society. For Protestants, literacy was an essential skill for reading the Bible, which, in turn, was essential for "preparation for salvation" (Kaestle, 1983, p. 3). Being a good citizen for the "kingdom" essentially meant being a good citizen for the nation. Furthermore, literacy was important for the nation's

commerce, as education served merchants, planters, clergy, and lawyers of the northern elite (Spring, 2011). A good citizen was a productive laborer in society—whether that transfer of goods was food, land, heaven, or law. Sound education meant that men would be prepared to vote intelligently, and women would be prepared to train their sons concerning ethical issues (Kaestle, 1983). Many early settlers had grieved under the rule of King George III, and strength of the republic hinged on the ability of people to maintain moral standards for life and citizenship. Education was the skeletal republican machine for giving people a unified basis on which to build their own thinking, enhance productivity, and become model citizens.

Personal Culture, Educational Beliefs, and Religious Viewpoints

While national unity obviously requires unity of purpose, for many early Americans, conflicts over personal culture, educational beliefs, and religious viewpoints impeded the exponential growth of schools. Men like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Noah Webster held their own ideas of what was true and sound educational theory and practice. Some, like Jefferson (1779), feared that "even under the best forms, those entrusted with power [had], in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny" (p. 1). The antidote to this ill would be to educate. Still others, like reformer Horace Mann (1872) in his Report for 1848, voiced concern that even "though all mankind were well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed, they might still be but half-civilized" (p. 663) and that "the extinction of human intelligence would plunge the race at once into the weakness and helplessness of barbarism" (p. 676). At this early stage of America's development, a link between education and civilized behavior was being recognized, yet conflicts arose over the establishment of a cohesive approach for

educating both mind and soul.

For the religious, the Bible was the sole instructional manual; for the intellectual, courses in liberal studies provided the best means for growth. At the same time, charity schools were perceived as antagonistic to the family's beliefs, while pay schools appeared to be "more in harmony with the family's goals" (Kaestle, 1983, p. 55). In theory, while having a republic filled with morally good, educated citizens seemed like the bulwark for any democratic society, personal ideas and beliefs stifled unified efforts for educating the masses. What was vitally important to one group of citizens often became a dissenting view of others. Nonetheless, stabilizing behavior of all citizens was a broadly reaching function of early schools, mostly because the poor and uneducated were viewed as major sources of the nation's ills. Poverty and crime united to become an undesirable character, and education was believed to be the means by which both could be transformed and molded into virtue.

For John Locke, a philanthropist and product of the Enlightenment, the child was an ideal source for molding and educating the poor of society. Tuckness (2010) indicated, "Locke believed throughout his life that most people unthinkingly adopt the beliefs and practices of those around them rather than revising their beliefs and actions on the basis of reason" (p. 629). The same issues that had plagued Puritans, professors, and politicians also disturbed the philosopher in Locke. While he saw the child as a malleable *tabula rasa*, the masses of urban poor proved a challenge to educate. Rural schools functioned in their own sphere, with rural Americans failing to see the need to "jump on the national bandwagon." On the other hand, charity schools strived to educate the poor and, hence, the potentially troubled of cities and the nation. What seemed as a strong benevolent

effort, though, sometimes produced minimal results. The poor, more often than not, remained poor. Nonetheless, schools still were seen as the means for conferring, not confirming, social status of individuals (Spring, 2011).

Regardless of heroic efforts by educational reformers, impact on the perpetual social cycle seemed minimal. However, the nation's early founders remained loyal to democratic virtues of "respect for the rights of individuals, regard for law, voluntary participation in public life, and concern for the common good" as forming the moral foundation of democracy (Lickona, 1991, p. 6). Leaders, like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, saw childhood as the perfect context for instilling such democratic values. Franklin (1749) proposed "true Merit [*sic*]" and "Ability to serve Mankind [*sic*]" were acquired and increased by learning (p. 30). Watz (2011) indicated that for Franklin, the public school naturally was the place where "morality and education were intricately conjoined" (p. 37).

Naturally, the blank slate to which Locke referred often could not help but show faint etchings of the family, church, or commonwealth. Tuckness (2010) conveyed the distinct purposes of these environments and their impacts according to Locke's view:

> Locke's argument is that the family is a society that comes together for a
> particular end: the propagation, care and education of children. Religious societies
> come together to further the spiritual interests of their members. Civil societies
> come together to further the civil interests of citizens. (p. 634)

Unfortunately, Locke's slate was slightly marred by diversity of purpose educationally and division of need socially—a dilemma only proving more demanding as the nation grew. While providing means by which people could grow into responsible citizens

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became more complex and challenging, reformers continued to hold to beliefs that schooling was the tool to build citizens; citizens were the tools to build the country.

Managerial Issues

Additional problems surfaced in forming an educationally united republic. Rural school districts favored locality and were tied to the community. Therefore, school funding was locally controlled—either by town governments or parents. Local funding carried with it local values. In contrast, the gap between wealthy and poor, educated and illiterate in urban districts presented different problems. While charity schools targeted the nation's needy, schools were managed by a variety of organizations. Though such schools were designed to produce minimally literate, moral citizens who were spiritually savvy, each sponsoring agency had its unique slant to the process. Infant schools, for example, while on the surface were designed "to better the workers' lot and create a model industrial community" (Kaestle, 1983, p. 47), often appeared to be no more than a babysitting service for working mothers.

The common school movement—emerging in New England during the 1830s under the leading of Horace Mann and other like-minded reformers such as James Carter, Henry Bernard, John Pierce, and Calvin Stowe—spread throughout most northern and midwestern states by the time of the Civil War. By the beginning of the 20th century, education went from being completely private to being available to the common masses. Most workingmen viewed the common school movement as a crucial focal point in protecting their rights and values as citizens. Understandably, knowledge was viewed as the exerciser and protector of power in a democratic form of government (Spring, 2011).

Unfortunately, the more diverse our nation became with its individual beliefs and

practices, the more education widened its breadth of purpose. To educate everyone in the nation (and subsequently, to promote character in its citizens) required a "one for all–all for one" mentality. As is sometimes the case, the wallet spoke louder than wisdom. Rural areas did not want to be taxed to educate children who were not "theirs." The childless argued their case, and the poor had nothing to give. Those like Horace Mann (1872) in his Report for 1846 emphasized:

> [T]he universal and ever-repeated argument in favor of free schools has been that the general intelligence which they are capable of diffusing, and which can be imparted by no other human instrumentality, is indispensable to the continuance of a republican government. (p. 531)

While some felt victimized to be educating the republic at their individual expenses, Mann saw those avoiding taxes as being thieves and wrongdoers of natural law. Watz (2011) noted that Mann saw the absence of morality as a detriment to fully developing students' character, which produced the negative effects of undesirable behavior and decreased academics. The school was one place to guarantee every child would be educated academically and morally. Once again, character was knitted as part of America's educational context.

Pedagogy and Focus

Diversity throughout the nation occurred not just with the structure of schooling and the status of those being schooled but also with the pedagogical practices being implemented. Rural schools revered local control. "From transient teachers" to "stifled toddlers" (Kaestle, 1983, p. 23), rural schools met the needs of their own educational communities. Parents had power—from feeding instructors to choosing curriculum.

Conversely, urban schools turned to teaching strategies such as the master-monitor approach of the Lancasterian system to reach the masses, which was cost effective and pedagogically simple. In the midst of such diverse practices, Howard, Berkowitz, and Schaeffer (2004) observed that educating character continued to be an essential component and, sometimes, primary mission of America's public school movement.

In fact, developing morally educated children through memorization techniques and didactic readings was the first instructive focus of the nation's schools. In early 18th century America, the most widely used and successful textbook was *The New England Primer* (Spring, 2011). By the mid-1800s, William Holmes McGuffey's series of textbooks, which advocated a specific system for teachers to use for teaching reading, introduced and solidified character development (Watz, 2011). The readers introduced ethical codes through a progression of lessons designed to teach "appropriate behavior" for 19th century model America. Their influence was especially important in the context of common schools that existed during a time of expanding social division between the rich and poor (Spring, 2011). By 1919, McGuffey's series became the standard text in nearly all states, having the largest circulation of any other book in the world, except the Bible (Lickona, 1991). Officially, the nation's first formal means of educating character had been established.

Effects of Diversity

Individual differences, however, as portrayed through the rise of distinct communal ideals, affected the manner in which the republic educated its future, and this diversity continued to be more widespread as the nation itself grew. Racial and ethnic conflicts existed during the early days of the republic but were heightened as the

population of the United States increased and as the nation's territories expanded. In the 1840s and 1850s, the influx of Irish Catholics became a threat to Protestant Anglo-Saxons. In terms of school, "the hostility . . . resulted in the common schools never truly being 'common' to all children in the nineteenth century" (Spring, 2011, p. 123). Howard et al. (2004) indicated that Catholics saw Protestant doctrine as incompatible with their own, which made them hesitant to recognize any state authority concerning character education.

Slavery and racial segregation brought even greater divide to "educating all" of the nation. Illiteracy was a weapon of power for slave masters, and lack of equitable funding for segregated schools deepened this ethnic divide. Dismally, African Americans received an inferior education. Under President Andrew Jackson, the commodity of westward expansion replaced the Native American nation and brought new, unexpected challenges. As was previously seen with discrepancies between rural and urban school divisions, the growing nation was also facing growing divisions—academically, economically, spiritually, and socially.

Becoming a multiracial and multiethnic nation, the United States with each successive year faced greater challenges to educate its citizens. As Ryan (1993) indicated, the country's founders and early educational pioneers saw the necessity for promoting virtues within an educational context, not only to increase a person's understanding of what it meant to be good but also to reinforce lasting habits of a democratic citizen. As wave after wave of new immigrants arrived in America, many had little formal education, were minimally skilled, and lacked understanding of the nuances of American society. At the height of the Progressive Era, the United States "increasingly [became] a nation of

recent immigrants filled with complexities and contradictions, striving to achieve prominence" (Bohan, 2003, p. 73). Regardless of myriads of conflicting views evident throughout the emerging industrialized nation, broadly accessible public schools served as sources of our nation's inheritance to the future—specifically, for intellectual enlightenment and perpetuation of republican ideals, even if at times as Mann (1872) indicated in his Report for 1848, "Victory [was] a fickle goddess" (p. 699).

Early Formal Programs

While the arena of formalized schooling was one means by which character was imparted to the nation's citizens, in the mid-1800s, community programs outside of school also were established to enhance character development in young people. One of the first programs, still in existence today, was The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), founded by George Williams in industrialized London in 1844. The program originated as a refuge for young men who migrated from rural areas to the city of London, which was thought to be complete with bleak landscapes and dangerous influences. Although religiously oriented with Protestant values, the organization's purpose was to meet societal needs in the community while also being open across rigid lines of social division.

In 1851, the organization made its way to American shores through the work of retired Boston sea captain Thomas Valentine Sullivan (YMCA, 2014). As American capitalism, imperialism, and industry progressed rapidly, middle-class families feared loss of values for their children and pushed for the establishment of character programs to help ensure their values remained intact. The YMCA developed such programs and quelled middle-class fears, though its initial target audience was solely young white

males (Watz, 2011).

Much like the YMCA, the Boys Scouts of America (BSA) developed in the early 20th century at the height of the Progressive Movement in the United States. While having a similar target audience as that of the YMCA, the BSA not only emphasized character but also character in action, which became one of the first attempts to officially nurture prosocial behavior in students. Although these programs began outside the sphere of public education, Watz (2011) noted that both the YMCA and the BSA "have, in many ways, been woven into the fabric of public education" (p. 44). In the United States, development of character became more than an internal set of social values for its citizens; the American public was advocating morals in action—both inside and outside public schools.

Educational Reform of Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Growing structural changes of American society moved education's focus toward becoming specialized and unified. Educated citizens were imperative to society, workers were imperative to the production base, and both intermingled beyond the confines of school and employment. Within this changing society, our nation's history of compulsory public education also transitioned—all the while reflecting the mores of the nation's numerous historical periods and values of its culture. Educational reform was tied to interests of individuals as well as to economic, political, and social growth of the nation. In terms of education's affective domain, character values and the subsequent implementation of those values were in an initial state of transition from being family-driven to locally-driven to state-driven and, finally, to nationally-driven.

The Committee of Ten. As the United States grew and became more urbanized

because of the Industrial Revolution, the number of those being educated also steadily grew. The focus of secondary education no longer was centralized to just the elite. Since "the 1890s brought change and transformation, sprinkled with attempts to cling to the past and preserve the status quo" (Bohan, 2003, p. 74), views for organizing both schools and curricula followed suit. Education was now a federal concern.

In 1892, the National Education Association attempted to provide cohesiveness to education's expanding challenges by forming the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies. Under the direction of Harvard's president Charles Eliot, the Committee of Ten's final report established a general framework for emphasizing a standard curriculum to prepare students for life and college. Specifically, all students should receive the same education, taught with the best methods. The overarching objectives presented followed a basic pattern. Instead of employing rote memorization, students were to become cognizable thinkers—acquiring facts, employing judgment to form opinions, making connections and generalizations of knowledge, and applying understanding to their own lives and learning (NEA, 1893). The lofty goal was for all students to receive a quality liberal arts education.

Concerns about social and cultural differences between the rich and the poor as well as implications for a practical versus privileged education surfaced. Through the standards recommended by the Council of the Committee of Ten, those being trained for college or the workforce were to receive the same core academic curriculum. Academic subjects were regarded as essential; training the mind trained the individual. Unlike experiences in Colonial America, such as the inculcation of values presented by *The New England Primer*, students now were being trained to become independent thinkers.

The mantra of equal education for everyone, as achieved through the same core academic curriculum, seemed an ideal way to ensure desired progression of the republic's citizens. Unfortunately, most agreed the work of the Committee of Ten presented an elitist view, and in the middle of a demographic revolution, diverse populations of students were not being served. The link between social class and educational opportunity was not mixing well with a burgeoning republic. If only the elite were educated, what would happen to the middle class or working poor? As a result, citizenry faced division, not unity of purpose.

The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education. In 1918, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, comprised mostly of professors from schools and colleges of education, called for an expanded and differentiated approach to curricula. In the name of a socially productive democracy, both government and industry needed a specialized and unified workforce so that citizens were "fit" into positions for making maximum societal contributions. The Commission advocated a curriculum of general studies through which "the individual and society [would] find fulfillment each in the other," specifically directed "toward ever nobler ends" (National Education Association, 1918, p. 9). Howard et al. (2004) reiterated that by the late 1800s and early 1900s, character education was approached in two ways: (a) traditionally seeking to instill values and virtues with an emphasis on doing good and (b) accomplishing a broader agenda of individual development for the betterment of society.

In opposition to the Committee of Ten's ideas, The Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education suggested that "requiring all students to follow the same academic course of study *increased* educational inequality" (Mirel, 2006, p. 17). Hence, the

document called for a more expansive course of study, and six objectives voiced attributes of character development:

- *Health*—pertaining to the individual and society;

- *Worthy home membership*—developing qualities that contribute to the "social institution" of the home and translate to society;

- *Vocation*—becoming equipped to secure a livelihood that benefits the individual as well as society;

- *Civic education*—developing qualities for becoming a productive citizen;

- *Worthy use of leisure*—having "worthy" activities to foster individual growth and enhance social relationships and bonds across all classes of society; and

- *Ethical character*—developing a sense of moral responsibility personally, which then permeates the fabric of the nation and its democratic ideals (National Education Association, 1918, pp. 11-16).

While many saw The Cardinal Principles as a "watered-down" curriculum, the push for core general studies and diverse ancillaries served American society well into the 20th century. As Haas (1984) summarized in "Displacing The Cardinal Principles":

The point of The Cardinal Principles was to train citizens in the then-current spirit of Progressive idealism, a point not hard to understand against the background of a war "to make the world safe for democracy" and a society struggling to assimilate millions of first-generation Americans whose families were ill-equipped to educate them in the American way of life. The schools were given the job. (pp. 39-40)

For society's majority, unskilled or semi-skilled work encompassed "life after high

school." An assembly-line educational product met the needs of a changing America, therefore, seemingly constituting a good secondary education and development of good citizens. During this time, American institutions of learning continued to encompass the voices and ideals of its people, and developing character became even more situated in the schoolhouse. Addressing the unique self-governing relationship existing in American society, Hartman (2008) suggested, "Schools were rooted in society, and were remade as society was remade" (p. 121).

20th Century

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ideas of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Albert Einstein, and Sigmund Freud impacted intellectual leaders. As indicated by Lickona (1993), consensus among the nation in terms of character crumbled. Darwinism led people to see morality as being in flux, while logical positivism introduced a distinction between *facts* (proven scientifically) and *values* (mere expressions of feeling, not objective truth). Suddenly, morality was relativized and privatized.

World War II and internment of Japanese Americans (1939-1945). While character philosophies were in flux, World War II altered the political alignment and social structure of the world, and its effects also altered the United States, specifically in relationship to the nation's beliefs about education. McClellan (1999) related the war as a "moral contest in which the values of democracy and decency were arrayed against the forces of authoritarianism and evil, and classrooms were expected to play an important role in the battle" (p. 71). Although the war began in 1939 with Germany's invasion of Poland, interest for the United States did not truly begin until Japan's attempt to neutralize the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Suddenly, the

nation was thrust into full-scale involvement. Shortly after, Japanese Americans living in the West became targets of suspicion, with ethnicity being the vehicle for political restraint. By mere association, Japanese Americans found themselves tainted with stigmas and becoming victims of Executive Order 9066. Even though they were displaced in their new homeland, these citizens had "[come] to America with an organized commitment to schooling" (James, 1987, p. 12) and further proved this commitment by establishing self-initiated, makeshift schools and curricula at the "camps."

Although public attitude toward Japanese Americans was divided, prioritization of education was a common thread for all parties. When Executive Order 9102 set up the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and enabled the federal government to exercise its own military authority and federal custody over education of the Nisei (i.e., sons or daughters of Japanese immigrants born and educated in America), assimilating Japanese Americans to democratic ideals, while using education as a vehicle, became an undertaking of federal influence. Many leaders in education were "aware of the perils of national mobilization and its attendant forms of social control" (James, 1987, p. 40). Regardless, the federal government encroached on controversial turf and implemented a precedent of control—this time with American behavior as a focus.

Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G. I. Bill). Wartime shifted Americans into a united effort to dethrone tyrannical rule. Women and teenagers joined the workforce to replace enlisted men, and children spent their formative years practicing air raid drills and visiting fallout shelters. Following World War II, American society found itself at another crossroad. As the nation adjusted to the postwar era, "[public

education] soon was linked to many, if not all, of the nation's major challenges and objectives: national defense, geo-political challenges, domestic tranquility, elimination of poverty, civil rights, and even economic recovery and development" (Johanningmeier, 2008, p. 366).

Returning veterans faced challenges of making smooth transitions from military service to civilian life; the federal government faced challenges of a workforce flooding a changed private sector. For everyone, education was one means to stall the influx into the labor market and provide a source for developing human capital. The schoolhouse, once again, was viewed as the best place to reach the masses. In the aftermath of World War II and the beginning phase of the Cold War, character education experienced a gradual shift to a civics focus (Beachum & McCray, 2005). For the federal government, rights and duties of citizenship became priority. Consequently, the importance of character was emphasized in schools through activities promoting moral and civic growth (McClellan, 1999).

McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare (1947-1957). Because communism was on the radar of American culture during the Cold War Era, this period was marked by the curtailment of civil rights and the expansion of the federal government's size and power. Hence, education became more political (Hartman, 2008). Truman, who led the United States through the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, presented a hard stance against the evils of communism. Tolerance was not an option; association determined guilt.

In education, the driving question became, do we repress ideas or instruct of their evils? The answer rested in the hands of the federal government and its ancillary

agencies. For example, the American Legion "continued its quest to purge from the schools—and from movies, radio, and television—any ideas that could possibly be linked to communism" (Spring, 2011, p. 364). Even teachers were required to sign mandatory loyalty oaths. If free speech were a threat to the nation, seditious behavior of teachers could be, too. Many viewed progressive education as "a conduit for communist subversion" (Hartman, 2008, p. 102).

John Dewey and pragmatism. The progressive theory of educational reformer John Dewey conveyed a new philosophy for character—*pragmatism*. Humans adopt ideas, values, and social institutions based on what works best for individual circumstances. Standards are individually developed, not by group consensus (Spring, 2011). Dewey's views were motivated by an attempt to adapt the classroom to the workplace, but Hartman (2008) suggested that many Americans believed education in the United States was "woefully out of step with the needs of the nation" (p. 1) and "undifferentiated fury was directed at progressive education" (p. 1).

Sputnik and the beginning of the Space Race (1957-1958). During World War II, the United States and Soviet Union became enemies with benefits, allies fighting together against Hitler and Nazi Germany. After the war ended, the two nations emerged as rival superpowers, and soon a race for space became part of a larger competition—a rivalry between communism and democracy. For the United States, this served as a wake-up call politically and educationally, yet in the homeland, two more personal warfronts occurred: civil rights issues of African Americans and federal intervention in educational affairs. Both set the tone for the nation's educational journey throughout the latter 20th century.

Until this time, precedents for federal financial support of education had been few. Political parties, as well as American citizens, were cautious about the federal government overstepping its bounds. Educational affairs "were constitutionally the purview of state and local government" (Urban, 2010, p. 74). After the baby boom following World War II, local schools needed more than state and local assistance, and national political leaders "neither passed nor approved legislation for federal aid to school districts" (Spring, 2011, p. 368). When Dwight D. Eisenhower won the presidential election in 1952, he immediately inherited a nation divided. Segregation remained a volatile issue. In 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate public schools for black and white students was unconstitutional, the Court's former decision of state-sponsored segregation was overturned, and education became more of a national issue. Subsequently, in September 1957, Eisenhower sent a message to Little Rock, Arkansas, through federal troops who helped enforce the court order in the *Brown* decision. A month later, the Soviet Union also sent a message to the United States, and the launching of Sputnik on October 4, 1957, created a near panic about American education. The proximity of events spoke volumes to the nation and awakened an even greater need for the federal government's involvement in controlling schools to meet national goals.

Spring (2011) concluded that the federal government's passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 influenced both school curricula and students' educational choices. Science and math became the focus, and federal money was attached to implementation of programs in these areas. Was the United States truly lagging behind the Soviets in science and technology, or was this perception tainted with political

agendas? Regardless of the answer, the solution to improve domestic perception (i.e., to quell the citizenry) was to pour money and energy into education (Urban, 2010). Although NDEA was designed to be a temporary intrusion of the federal government concerning state affairs, a precedent was being set: national climate trumps state rights. Education was the recipient of a shift in political power, and while schools avoided imposing any one set of values, educating behavior still occurred within classrooms but in a less organized way (Lickona, 1991).

The loss of character. Howard et al. (2004) suggested the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s was a nadir for character education in K-12 public schools. Citing McClellan (1999), the authors noted that—more than any other time in history—the influence of positivism, the attitude of anti-communism, and a greater distinction between public and private behavior affected America's attitude toward schools and their influences on character development in students. Some saw American education growing "soft" and advocated academic disciplines to be the vanguards. States shied away from federal aid, attempting to maintain some form of autonomy as the federal government pushed itself into a leadership role concerning educational policies. An on-going battle between progressive educational ideas and traditional methods of instruction drove decisions not only of curricula but also of the federal government's role in education, and although always present to some extent, educating character temporarily took a quiet back seat.

1960s and 1970s. The 1960s presented turbulent times for educating character. A rise in personalism—a philosophical school of thought that emphasized individual rights and freedom over responsibility—downplayed moral authority and moral norms (Lickona, 1993). During the 1960s, many viewed restraint of personal freedom as taboo.

In the 1970s, personalism gave rise to values classification, which in its simplest form promoted the belief of students learning how to clarify their own values without the influence of others.

Mulkey (1997) noted an additional surge in character development during this time: Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of children's moral reasoning. Kohlberg suggested that children, by discussion, could move through a successive network of moral reasoning stages. Moral behavior became a product of rationale thinking and autonomous judgment, and as Hymowitz (2003) indicated, Kohlberg's "theories meshed well with the child-centered approaches of progressive educators and with the increasingly anti-authoritarian attitudes of the 1960s" (p. 105). During this unsettled era of United States history, both the moral climate and practices in public schools shifted drastically. The school was no longer challenged with promoting a didactic pedagogy of values but with facilitating an environment where individuals (i.e., students) learned to make personal value decisions.

Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries

1980s. The decade of the eighties experienced a resurgence of concern for the United States both academically and socially. During President Ronald Reagan's first term of office, the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* sent alarming signals that American schools were failing. Leaders at local, state, and federal levels placed reform efforts at the forefront of government policy. Simultaneously, leaders also called on schools to take more active roles in students' moral development, and, therefore, educators developed programs to foster prosocial values, character development, and democratic virtues in schoolchildren (Smith, 1989). Dovre (2007) noted that during this time, the modern character education movement

emerged from both parental and public concern of the nation's moral drift. In fact, by the latter part of the decade, at least 31 states offered courses aimed at teaching some aspects of values "in the expectation of helping to produce concerned citizens who [would] preserve our democracy" (Heller, 1989, p. 3).

1990s. During presidential administrations of the 1990s, the federal government took even greater proactive roles regarding the vision and funding of policies supporting character education. Although renewed calls for direct teaching of character were controversial, advocates postulated that schools were seen as shirking responsibilities, and this neglect correlated to a general moral decline in young people (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Prestwich, 2004).

At a national education summit convened by President George H. W. Bush in September 1989, business leaders, members of the Bush administration, and 49 governors discussed and outlined principles that would, subsequently, become a set of national performance goals for education. Included within two of the six goals were features of character education that President Bush (1990) delivered during his State of the Union address: (a) students exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and (b) schools being free of drugs and violence and offering safe, disciplined learning environments.

In his 1997 State of the Union address, President William J. Clinton vowed to make sure American schools were safe, disciplined and drug-free, and instilled American values. His administration repeatedly called for an emphasis on character education and "distributed nearly $1.9 million to 8 states through a grant facility to encourage state/community partnerships to implement CE [character education] programs in

schools" (Mikuta, 1997, p. 1). In January 1999, Clinton announced that his FY 2000

budget would propose to triple funding (from $200 million to $600 million) for the 21st

Century Community Learning Centers Program (Reed, 1999). In awarding these funds,

the Department of Education helped roughly 1.1 million children each year (Reed, 1999)

and enabled school districts to fund public schools as community education centers that

provided students with access to homework centers and tutors as well as to cultural

enrichment, recreational, and nutritional opportunities. In addition, life-long learning

activities were available for community members in a local school setting (de Kanter,

Williams, Cohen, & Stonehill, 2000).

2000s. In 2001, under Title V of the reauthorization of ESEA titled No Child Left

Behind (NCLB), President G. W. Bush continued the programs of the Clinton

administration and included character education as a major focus of his reform agenda.

Additional funds provided grants to states and districts to train teachers in methods of

incorporating character-building lessons and activities into the classroom. In August of

that year, Bush unveiled the Communities of Character program, but with the events of

September 11, 2001, the focus of character education lost center stage. However,

"working with bipartisan sponsors . . . [the administration] . . . tripled the amount of

character education pilot grants available through the U.S. Department of Education"

(Howard et al., 2004, pp. 203-204). Under Bush's reauthorization of ESEA, after-school

programs experienced a "political focus" as they transitioned toward systemic

accountability for federal funds (Zhang & Byrd, 2006, p. 3). At the same time, funding

decisions transitioned from federal to state hands, awarding state departments of

education block grants, which states individually allocated to local communities.

In 2010, President Barack Obama broadened the flexibility of NCLB with another ESEA revision, A Blueprint for Reform. Under principles set forth by the document, having successful, safe, and healthy students meant having not only supportive schools but also supportive families and communities. In contrast to the previous Bush administration's in-school curricular endeavors, character education under the Obama administration became a component of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLCs). In June 2010, the Obama administration proposed to invest "1.2 billion for a reformed and strengthened 21st CCLC program, which [would] provide additional time and comprehensive supports to students and families" (USDE, 2010b, p. 3).

Intended to assist those attending low-performing schools in high-poverty areas, 21st CCLCs were designed to allot opportunities for students and their families to engage in academic as well as enrichment services extending beyond the school day. A current goal of 21st CCLCs is to help students meet local and state academic standards in core subjects. Additional services—such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, technology education programs, art, music, and recreational programs, and character education programs—become supplemental and complementary to enhancing learning in academic areas. Formula grants, administered by the United States Department of Education, are awarded to states that, in turn, award competitive subgrants to eligible entities—including local education agencies, community-based organizations, and public or private sectors operating in school, community, or national settings (USDE, 2010c). As the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool programs, 21st CCLCs function as supporting roles for academic and social successes of students in their local school districts, individual

schools, and surrounding communities. In contrast to previous methodologies for educating character, 21st CCLCs serve a narrowed targeted audience, and participation by students and families is optional. Considered an enrichment program endorsed by outside entities, character education is not promoted in all centers.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries served as periods of transition to an era when the inculcation of positive social behaviors was, once more, determined to be a governmental interest. In combination with support of the federal government, private broad-based programs promoting character development denoted this modern period. Both federal and private sectors showed interest in fostering character of future citizens, and the schoolhouse served as a primary context for implementation—either during or after school hours.

However, character development and the inculcation of civic responsibility currently are hidden in the much more academically-oriented federal program of 21st Century Community Learning Centers and, subsequently, often as a distant secondary outcome, if at all. So, one might ask, how is the major influence called "school," mandated for all youth, affecting citizens of tomorrow in areas outside academics? Even more, what subtle and less overt forces are at work in the social development of youth within the walls of today's schools?

Society and Student Behavior

Adhering to theoretical perspectives of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, student behavioral development is both bridged and affected by complex, dynamic, and reciprocal relationships between individuals and environments. For society, implications are evidenced through the structure of Bronfenbrenner's model termed

"ecosystems." Hong and Garbarino (2012) defined the ecosystem level as consisting "of inter-relations between two or more settings or interactions, one of which does not directly involve the individual" (p. 276). While it is true that maturing students are not fully active as adult citizens, their negative behaviors within school contexts serve as matters of trepidation for society—both as current burdens and possible expenditures of the future.

Costs to society. The measurable and immeasurable costs of students' asocial and at risk behaviors illuminate several matters of apprehension for society. Cohen, Miller, and Rossman (1994), using a conceptual framework for estimating costs and consequences of violent behavior, summarized four costs imposed on society:

- cost caused directly by violence;

- cost incurred by society as it attempts to deter future behavior;

- cost incurred by the offender; and

- cost of society's desire to punish behavior (pp. 79-84).

These monetary and nonmonetary expenses render legitimate concern for Americans. What happens to a society that is not continuously trying to foster a reduction in undesirable behaviors? Ultimately, individuals, schools, and communities are affected (Cohen, 1998; Goldstein, Young, & Boyd, 2008; Miller, Fisher, & Cohen, 2001).

Implications for students. Kena et al. (2014), reporting on the condition of education for Congress, indicated that since 1992, the rate of nonfatal victimization (i.e., theft, rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) against 12- to 18-year-old students at school has fallen from 181 to 52 crimes per 1,000 students, and the victimization rate for all specific types of crime also has declined. These results

illustrate nearly two decades of steady decline regarding rates of school crime. However, the total victimization rate *at school* (i.e., inside the school building, on school property, or on the way to or from school) in 2012 was higher than in 2010 (52 vs. 35 per 1,000 students). In fact, these same students experienced 1,365,000 nonfatal victimizations at school, compared with 991,000 nonfatal victimizations away from school. Additionally, the theft rate at school was higher in 2012 than in 2010 (24 vs. 18 thefts per 1,000 students), while away from school no measurable difference was found.

Kena et al. (2014) further reported that between 1992 and 2012, the rate of violent victimizations (i.e., rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) against 12- to 18-year-old students decreased both at and away from school. Alternatively, while in 1992 incidents of more violent victimizations occurred away from school than at school (94 vs. 68 per 1,000 students), more violent victimizations occurred at school in 2012 than away from school (29 vs. 20 per 1,000 students). Furthermore, the violent victimization rate was higher in 2012 than in 2010 both at school (29 vs. 17 per 1,000) and away from school (20 vs. 12 per 1,000) students.

Even more alarming, victimization rates at school in 2012 varied according to student characteristics. Rates of violent victimization and serious violent victimization were higher for younger students than for older students. For those ages 12-14, the rate of victimization was 42 per 1,000 students, compared with 16 per 1,000 students for those ages 15-18.

Implications for learning environments. Students' exposure to such behaviors presents far-reaching repercussions. Bandura (1971) posited that instead of principal causes of behavior being driven solely by inner forces (i.e., needs, drives, and impulses),

explanations for a person's actions also are attributed to direct experience or observation of behavior of others. While learning through direct experience does shape patterns of new behavior through rewarding and punishing consequences, observation of others—either deliberately or inadvertently—influences learning more naturally in everyday life.

Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1961), in what became known as the Bobo doll experiment, demonstrated that subjects exposed to aggressive models reproduce aggression resembling that of the models and are generally less inhibited in their behavior than subjects exposed to the nonaggressive condition. In contrast, subjects exposed to nonaggressive models show decreased probability of occurrences of aggressive behavior and also emit more restricted ranges of behavior. For maturing students, social learning does not occur in a vacuum, and the school context serves as a means to reach all students from all backgrounds, nurturing them in the development of positive skills, habits, and attitudes that ultimately have an effect on society.

Impact of Socioeconomics

The construct of socioeconomic status (SES)—measured by a combination of income, education, and occupation—has interested policymakers, researchers, and educators since the nation's inception. Because socioeconomic inequities continue to deepen in today's society, policy makers leverage programs to balance injustices, sociologists explore SES as a means of predicting student behavior, and educators strive to minimize its linkages to students' future successes. Ultimately, SES affects society's aggregate.

Previous research has shown correlation between SES and academic achievement (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Caro, McDonald, & Willms, 2009; Coley, 2002; Duncan &

Magnuson, 2011; Palardy, 2008). However, mixed interpretations exist as to the association of SES and student behavior. In an early investigation of students in small, rural communities, Nye, Short, and Olsen (1958) found no significant relationship between delinquent behavior and SES. In 1964, Akers similarly examined urban populations of junior high students and also found no significant differences in delinquent behavior by SES. Moreover, the researcher noted no association between the two variables. Although neither study was designed to develop sweeping theoretical generalizations, implications for understanding correlation between geographical areas and student behavior are significant.

In a longitudinal study of students from birth to age 21, Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, and Hordwood (2004) examined associations between indices of socio-economic deprivation in childhood and later involvement in crime. Results suggested that childhood socioeconomic disadvantage was associated with clear increases in rates of both self-reported crime and officially recorded convictions. The researchers proposed that "higher rates of crime amongst [*sic*] children from socio-economically disadvantaged families reflect a life course process in which adverse family, individual, school and peer factors combine to increase individual susceptibility to crime" (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Hordwood, 2004, p. 964). Other research found that even 24-month-old children from lower SES households were twice as likely as those from higher SES households to display disparities in being able to self-regulate behavior (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). In addition, while a study by Chen and Weikart (2008) supported the hypothesis that poverty and minority status of student populations predict school disorder, Humensky (2010) evidenced that higher adolescent SES is associated

with higher risk for the progression of substance use problems into early adulthood.

Although linkages between SES and student behavior differ for variables of age, ethnicity, and geographical dispersion, the influence of school environment continues to serve as a crucial component of students' microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2008). In their examination of school size, school location, school SES, and school future orientation climate, Chen and Vazonyi (2013) supported the application of an ecological systems framework. Using a nationally representative sample of youth, the researchers discovered that school context served as one environment where students matured in their development of positive or negative behavior traits. Their findings denoted that students "who have a more positive view of their future are less likely to engage in problem behaviors as these behaviors may place their future into jeopardy" (Chen & Vazonyi, 2013, p. 78). Consequently, regardless of other mitigating factors, the school remains as a primary environment for impacting students and their developing behaviors.

Student Development and Behavior

Early developmental stage. Hamlin, Wynn, and Bloom (2010) indicated that moral instinct to prosocial behavior existed in children even as young as three months. Through using "characters" (i.e., wooden blocks) and both helpers/hinderers as variables in an experimental study, the researchers showed that young infants evaluated others on the basis of social behavior toward third parties. In fact, 3-month-olds revealed an aversion to antisocial actors.

Further research by Hamlin, Wynn, Bloom, and Mahajan (2011) indicated that 5-month olds *preferred* individuals who acted positively toward others. For 8-month-olds, they *selectively preferred* "characters" who acted positively toward prosocial individuals

and negatively toward antisocial individuals. On a rudimentary level, these infants already were "making relatively complex and sophisticated social judgments in the first year of life" and were "sensitive to the global context" where behaviors occurred (Hamlin, Wynn, Bloom, & Mahajan, 2011, p. 19933). By distinguishing between socially and emotionally preferred behaviors, as well as showing preferences for more positive actions, young infants naturally chose attributes concomitant of a safe and caring climate. This insight adds to the importance of the question whether contextual factors, in this case blocks, impact behavior.

Early childhood. This stage of childhood development presents a time of energy, emotions, and complex cognitive growth. Preschoolers contrast moments of affection and cooperation with instances of belligerence and hostility. Correspondingly, behavior of preschoolers often elicits similar yet unpredictable conduct.

Paulus and Moore (2014) investigated the developmental changes of sharing expectations and sharing behavior in 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds and found that expectations about sharing and actual sharing followed similar developmental pathways. Children of all age groups behaved more prosocially and expected more prosocial behavior from another protagonist (i.e., friend) when the choice of sharing bore no cost. While 3-year-olds did not differentiate between a friend and a disliked peer as a potential sharing partner, the 4- and 5-year-old children did. In fact, the researchers found a clear relation between 5-year-olds' own sharing behaviors and their sharing expectations of others, suggesting that children's developmental changes influence expectations of prosocial behavior. Accordingly, these expectations were based on an early tendency to trust in the prosocial motivation of others, a fundamental component of positive climates and the

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relationships that occur within those environments.

In a review of recent studies, Hepach, Vaish, and Tomasello (2013) posited three findings concerning young children's motivation for behaving prosocially:

- They are motivated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards for their helpful acts.

- Their feelings of concern (e.g., sympathy) for others underlie their prosocial behavior.

- They are more concerned that someone receives help, rather than "getting credit" for providing help to someone.

At this early developmental stage, young children's motivations toward prosocial behavior show tendencies of both self-regulation and altruistic interaction with others.

Elementary years. From age six to a period of early adolescence, elementary-aged children rapidly grow physically, refining both gross and fine motor skills. They also extend their academic and social roles with learning to be used throughout their lives. During these years, children rely more on parents or other adults for their emotional and social needs.

In a longitudinal study of 166 boys and 128 girls, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) examined children's third-grade social behavior as a predictor of their eighth-grade peer preferences and academic achievement. The researchers found that early prosocial behavior strongly predicted children's subsequent levels of academic achievement, and early prosocialness strongly impacted adolescents' preferences for peers who cooperated, helped, shared, or consoled others. During these formable years, students' self-development is socially situated. Fittingly, assisting them in acquiring positive attitudes and behaviors influences a broad range of

their developmental outcomes.

More alarmingly, Riesch et al. (2013) showed that as students approached the age of 11, a shift in behavior began to occur. Documenting types and frequencies of health risk behavior among pre-adolescents, as well as examining child, family, and environmental factors that predict them, the researchers discovered that pre-adolescents participated in health-risk behaviors. More importantly, they indicated that "pre-adolescents are curious and engaging in health risk behaviors previously found among older children aged 14-18" (Riesch et al., 2013, p. 1070). This newly established pattern for emerging adolescents, which once was confined to the middle and high school environments, presents challenges to elementary settings and probable repercussions for middle school environments.

Early adolescence. During this period, most often identified as middle school years, peers become more important and play greater roles in students' lives. Transitioning through a time of physical, emotional, and cognitive changes, young teens strive for independence and focus on developing friendships and romantic relationships. Crockett and Crouter (1995) summarized this period as a time of preparation for adulthood. Along with gaining physical and relational maturity, students also refine skills for adult work and family roles. In addition, they solidify mindsets for "becoming emotionally and behaviorally autonomous, resolving identity issues, and acquiring a set of values" (Crockett & Crouter, 1995, p. 1). Their associations with immediate family and other significant adults begin to change. For some, role models often are vacant or have limited influence, and the school environment becomes the context for acquiring such skills and mindsets. For others, the schoolhouse serves as a supplemental milieu,

supporting transitions toward social maturity. Choices adolescents make during this period often are precursors for subsequent development in later adolescence and adulthood. Hence, their choices have tremendous implications for families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities (Crockett & Crouter, 1995). If and how these choices can be influenced, therefore, becomes an essential question for exploration.

Middle school and its students. School is a social organization. Accordingly, for most middle school students, their waking hours are spent within walls of social contexts where behavior is both developed and demonstrated by all parties, either positively or not. Wentzel, Barry, and Caldwell (2004) found that in eighth grade, while friends' prosocial behavior was related to other friends' prosocial behavior, this was not the case for academic performance. Why, then, do friends have such influence on behavior and not on academics? The researchers suggested reasonable speculation that prosocial behavior itself is more inherently social and interactive. Evolving peer groups, which elicit both spoken and silent cues, comprise the summative social setting of most middle schools. Accordingly, students' behavioral cues often signal what is appropriate and desirable behavior to other peers and, hopefully, what also is not.

During this milestone of transition, middle school students' peers are not the only relationships impacting adolescent development. Following a longitudinal sample of 248 students from sixth through eighth grade, Wentzel (1997) discovered eighth graders' perceptions of caring teachers predicted their efforts to achieve positive social and academic outcomes at school. Based on student survey responses, the researcher linked characteristics of teachers' pedagogical caring to adolescents' perceptions of positive social and academic motivations:

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- demonstrating democratic interaction styles,

- developing expectations for student behavior in light of individual differences,

- modeling a "caring" attitude toward their own work, and

- providing constructive feedback (Wentzel, 1997, pp. 415-418).

While the premise of middle school students recurrently being guided by peer groups is widely accepted, the influence of others within the school environment (in this case, adults) also shows reasonable feasibility.

Stiff-Williams (2010) advocated the urgency of aiding students in developing "decision-filters to negotiate life's challenges" in order to give them "a better chance to grow into adults who will lead productive lives and become contributors to society, rather than a drag or an endangerment" (p. 119). Lippold, Powers, Syvertsen, Feinberg, and Greenberg (2012) further related the importance of school in lives of adolescents:

> Schools play a central role in helping young people successfully navigate the transition to adolescence. The quality of a student's connection and attachment to school, as well as school-level factors like school climate, have been shown to protect against problem behavior and low academic achievement. (p. 822)

The researchers indicated that students who have quality connections and attachments to school also are more likely to be protected against problem behavior. The middle school years present a volatile time. The school as community provides a powerful framework for looking at educational practice and for effectively meeting needs of students (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997).

Eighth grade. Positioned at the pinnacle year of middle school, eighth graders, essentially 13- and 14-year-olds, no longer fit the parameters of the definition of *children*

but are not yet fully developed enough to be termed *young adults*. In essence, they truly are "in the middle." While being comfortable with and often proud of their roles as the oldest kids in the building, high school awaits these students as an exciting, yet silently intimidating, adventure. Longing for independence, they no longer want treated as children, but often lack the decision-making maturity of their older, more mature high school peers. For many during this time of social and emotional growth, friendships seem to evolve on a cyclical basis, dating scenarios frequently play out as melodramatic dramas, and rules and limits often are tested.

In 2013, the national Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, indicated consistent trends developing in the middle school years concerning asocial and at risk behaviors exhibited by eighth grade students. For those behaviors measured as contributing to violence,

- sixty-four percent of states found eighth graders more likely than sixth graders to be electronically bullied (including through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, web sites, or texting);

- forty-one percent found them more likely to be in a physical fight; and

- thirty-two percent found them more likely to carry a weapon (such as a gun, knife, or club).

In terms of alcohol and other drug use, similar trends occurred between sixth grade and eighth grade behavior:

- Seventy-three percent of states found eighth graders more likely than sixth graders to have ever drunk alcohol (other than a few sips).

- Sixty-eight percent found them more likely to have ever used marijuana.

- Twenty-seven percent found them more likely to have ever used inhalants (i.e., sniffed glue, breathed the contents of spray cans, or inhaled any paints or sprays to get high).

- Eighteen percent found them more likely to have ever used any form of cocaine (such as powder, crack, or freebase).

Such data raise concerns about eighth graders developing increased likelihoods of misconduct and, subsequently, present alarming trends for middle schools environments.

School Climate

As early as 1908, the importance of school climate was addressed through Perry's explication to principals concerning topics (e.g., discipline, attendance and punctuality, habits and ideals, and school spirit) in relationship to students' behavioral development and managing a school. Dewey (1916) also recognized the social function of education and the importance of school as a "special environment." He noted:

> We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference. . . . [S]chools remain, of course, the typical instance of environments framed with express reference to influencing the mental and moral disposition of their members. (p. 22)

Over the last several decades, the construct of school climate has garnered a number of interchangeable titles, including environment, culture, atmosphere, and community. Similarly, its composition also has become an extensive list of attributes and multidimensional variables, most of which focus on physical, social, emotional, and

academic dimensions of schools.

Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) presented a comprehensive definition of school climate, suggesting that it is the quality and character of school life, including the "norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe" (p. 182). Within a school building, such definition is based on patterns of people's experiences, both individually and collectively. Although student misconduct readily occurs within the school context, school climate serves as a protective factor for moderating students' negative behaviors (Brookmeyer et al., 2006; Johnson, 2009). Likewise, students' perceptions of positive school climates are associated with affecting a broad range of their behavioral and emotional problems (Kuperminc et al., 1997).

For public school systems, one challenge becomes creating a context to help students internalize essential knowledge sets and increase their social-emotional awareness and resulting subsequent behavior. Greenberg et al. (2003) in reviewing empirical evidence of school-based prevention and youth development programming found that such initiatives could positively influence diverse arrays of social, health, and academic outcomes. More recently, Parker et al. (2010) shared two key efforts to improve student behavior: (a) interventions and strategies to facilitate behavior improvement and (b) school-wide approaches focusing on altering relational variables that occur in and around classrooms.

Simply instituting programs presents unique challenges. Berkowitz and Bustamante (2013) suggested that for programs to truly work, they must become authentic priorities of the school or school system. As such, research-based strategies

must be "enacted comprehensively, authentically, and effectively by leaders and staff who understand this vision and have the requisite knowledge and skills to implement such strategies" with fidelity (Berkowitz & Bustamante, 2013, p. 17). Although these researchers attributed educators' jaundiced views of new innovations to seeing previous ones come and go, they also indicated that people who are significant in a child's life have the single most powerful influence on a child's development. For a middle school student, one place to find this link of significance is within the context of school climate.

Society and life experiences of children and youth have changed during the last century, including "increased economic and social pressure on families; weakening of community institutions that nurture children's social, emotional, and moral development; and easier access by children to media that encourage health-damaging behavior" (Greenberg et al., 2003, p. 467). Middle school environments are not immune to these influences. Subsequently, these environments commonly become supplemental, and in some cases exclusive, sources for meeting students' social-emotional needs and for fostering their development of constructive thoughts and actions. Even the role of perceived school climate during middle school is vital for supporting the psychological and behavioral adjustment of students during this critical period (Way et al., 2007).

As a component of this pivotal stage of adolescence, middle school environments ultimately have potential to nurture students' future trajectories of conduct (Bandura, 1971; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 2008; Brookmeyer et al., 2006; Crockett & Crouter, 1995; Johnson, 2009; Wentzel, 1997). As always, such resulting outcomes of the schoolhouse impact families, communities, states, and eventually the nation. For adults, school climate serves as a conduit for shaping

productive and supportive learning environments; for maturing adolescents, a scaffold for

building their social and emotional behaviors.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology

Research Design

Lee and Shute (2010) suggested that psychological and emotional attributes of students are susceptible to change as a result of students' environments, experiences, and social interactions and that these interactions impact learning. While previous studies have addressed connections to school environment and student learning, the aim of this descriptive study was to explore middle school contextual factors to determine what attributes of school environments in rural settings may influence adolescents to not engage in at risk and asocial behaviors.

The Office of Safe Schools, a division of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, annually publishes its Safe Schools Reports, compilations produced through a statewide longitudinal data collection system. Data sets represent all safety information regarding incidences of student-level infractions in Pennsylvania's public schools. The result of a transparent, web-based system of data collection and dissemination, Safe Schools Reports present summative analyses of safety trends in Pennsylvania's public schools. The report repository permits Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to enter and access data at a number of tiered levels—all related to violence and weapons possession incidents, as well as a variety of misconduct issues. Reports serve as analytical tools to assist schools and districts in recognizing, preventing, and remedying school safety problems as well as examining the effectiveness of their current prevention and discipline programs.

By using data from state collected reports on student-level infractions for eighth grade students in Pennsylvania, six rural public middle schools were identified as

participants in the study. Schools were selected based on consistency of eighth grade infractions over a three-year period. Three schools with the greatest number of infractions and three with the fewest infractions per 100 students represented both ends of the misconduct range. By exploring both ends of this range, the researcher attempted to reveal patterns or themes that likely have influence on student behavior in middle school settings. Through an ethnographic design, the researcher conducted a collective case study in order to provide insights into middle school environments and their influences on student behavior. Exploring multiple cases in rural school districts of Pennsylvania, the researcher endeavored to expose contextual physical characteristics, shared patterns of behavior (actions taken by an individual), beliefs (how an individual thinks about or perceives things), and language (how an individual talks to others) of middle school personnel concerning factors contributing to their respective school climates (Creswell, 2008).

As a participant observer, the researcher gathered both emic (i.e., first-order concepts built from the perspective of one who participates in a culture) and etic (i.e., second-order concepts built from the perspective of one who does not participate in a culture) data from school personnel through school site visits, collected documents, interviews, and an on-line survey. Using cross-case analysis, the researcher examined data to identify themes, patterns, similarities, and differences of the explored school environments. By such examination, the researcher sought to provide further insight into associations of middle school contextual factors with student asocial and at risk behavior.

Setting

Located in the mid-Atlantic United States, Pennsylvania is comprised of 48 rural

and 19 urban counties. With a population of over 12 million, 80% have graduated high

school or beyond, and 27% have achieved bachelor's degrees or higher. The state's

median household income is $52,000, while its poverty rate rests at 13% (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2014). At the school district level, 235 of the state's 500 public school districts

are rural. Data were collected from six middle schools in those rural school districts.

Research Questions

In addition to exploring the central question (i.e., What patterns of school

contextual factors appear to influence behaviors of middle school students?), the study

also sought to examine the following subquestions regarding relationships between

student behavior and attributes or conditions deriving from structural and social

characteristics of middle school environments:

- What contextual factors emerge as common among middle school climates with low incidences of student misconduct?

- What contextual factors emerge as common among middle school climates with high incidences of student misconduct?

- What emerging themes, in relationship to behaviors of school personnel, show significant differences between the two classifications of schools?

Instruments and Data Collection Processes

Instruments for the study were informed by the Alliance for the Study of School

Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). Each instrument was

piloted twice and underwent any necessary revisions before being administered to the

sample. Through surveys, interviews, observations, and documents, data were collected

in natural settings of six middle school environments. Because data were gathered in

familiar work settings of participants, observations occurred continuously, and participants avoided externally imposed constraints. The researcher's ability to interpret results without taking into account other situational characteristics was enhanced (McMillan, 2008).

Surveys. To obtain a broad representation from a large group, the researcher attempted to have administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers in each school participate in an adapted online version of the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). Designed to achieve an in-depth examination of the health, function, and performance of schools, the SCAI asked participants to rate their experiences of their schools through an analytic trait scale (i.e., rubric) structured to reflect three levels—high, medium, and low functioning. Descriptive language created a rubric-type evaluation for each level of each item. Four sub-factors of the instrument were measured: (a) faculty relations, (b) leadership and decision making, (c) discipline and management environment, and (d) attitude and culture.

If the researcher found strong reluctance shown by intended respondents or a low response rate elicited by a specific school, two of the study's additional instruments (i.e., interviews and on-site school observations) were informed by questions contained within the survey's four sub-factor measures. Regardless of the participation rate in the online version of the School Climate Assessment Instrument by school personnel, the researcher sought to directly interview the principal, guidance counselor(s), and two teachers, while concurrently observing the school context for climate clues.

Interviews. To gather information from middle school personnel (i.e., administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers), the researcher conducted face-to-face,

semi-structured interviews to systematically explore patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language concerning factors associated with participants' respective school climates (see Appendices A and B for interview questions). These key informant interviews provided the researcher with in-depth insights and understandings from individuals who are particularly knowledgeable and articulate concerning attributes of school climate (McMillan, 2008). Interviews were both formal and on-site, occurring during school hours. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from each interviewee. Also, the researcher conveyed to participants the purpose of the study, the amount of time the interview would take to complete, the plans for the information gathered at the interview, and the availability of a study summary when the research was completed (Creswell, 2008).

During one-on-one interviews, the researcher asked semi-structured questions, allowing for follow-up probes seeking clarification or elaboration of incomplete or ambiguous responses (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2013). Questions and responses were audio recorded during interviews, including impromptu conversations that occurred between the researcher and each participant. In addition, the researcher took notes of responses of interviewees. The goal of interviews was to garner unconstrained responses of emic data to be coded for further analysis.

Observations. Through informal, moderate participation observations, the researcher studied events, situations, settings, practices, and other social phenomena of the study's middle school environments as they occurred (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). This enabled the researcher to witness phenomena of each middle school as well as to gain perspectives of each environment through naturalistic observations. The

researcher recorded reflective field notes and completed predetermined walk-through observation checklists with a goal of gathering an array of factors to be coded for further analysis (see Appendix C for observation items). The researcher was a nonparticipant observer, situated on the periphery of each school environment, watching and recording phenomenon related to the study's central focus (Creswell, 2008).

For on-site observations, the researcher obtained required permissions to engage in walk-throughs of each school setting and inquired of each school's protocol for when, how long, and who or what could be observed. Taking limited descriptive field notes to gain an overall impression of the school environment while attempting to build rapport with school persons, the researcher also used an observational checklist to record attributes of context as informed by ASSC's School Climate Assessment Instrument.

Documents. With assistance and permission of school administrators, the researcher obtained original copies of student handbooks for all schools of the study. These preexisting secondary data sources contained information concerning notable attributes of each school's environment and provided additional qualitative information about the study's sample. Through review of these data sources (including analyses of word choices and overall tones), the researcher determined usefulness for answering the study's central question and investigated each school's protocol concerning student behavior (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). Such documents provided "background that is not accessible from community members" (Mertens & Wilson, 2012, p. 387).

Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to select six rural public middle school sites (Creswell, 2008). Using data from state collected reports on student-level infractions for

eighth grade students in Pennsylvania, the researcher identified three schools that had the

fewest incidences of misconduct and three that had the highest incidences of misconduct

over a three-year period. Exploring schools at extreme ends of the misconduct range

allowed the researcher to search for contrasting data and learn from environments of both

particularly troublesome and enlightening manifestations of the central phenomenon

under study (Creswell, 2008; Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2013). In addition, the

convenience sample presented by each school enhanced the researcher's ability to

provide complex pictures of middle school environments (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

Coinciding with protocols for qualitative study, the selection of fewer entities for

examination generated greater depth of description and understanding of contextual

factors within sample environments (McMillan, 2008).

Data analysis procedure. Rovai, Baker, and Ponton (2013) contended that

qualitative data analysis "will always involve generating a list of themes that are

categories of the major ideas of concepts in the data" (p. 33). As part of the ethnographic

process, the researcher described and analyzed data of each middle school to make

interpretations about the patterns seen and heard (Creswell, 2008).

Survey analysis. Survey data initially were analyzed by the research team at the

Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC), a division of the Charter College of

Education at California State University in Los Angeles. The School Climate Assessment

Instrument (SCAI; Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014a) provided a scoring

procedure that allowed for a highly valid and reliable indicator of the quality of each

school climate.

Validity of the SCAI is demonstrated in the following areas:

- Face validity – The instrument reflects familiar and accurate descriptions of current school contexts and is based on current research findings and recognized characteristics of effective schools.

- Construct Validity – Each subscale is based in a theoretical set of constructs, and items within each scale relate to one another on both practical and theoretical levels.

- Predictive Validity – As a reliable measure of internal locus of control (LOC) producing behaviors, the instrument is predictive of outcomes related to each school's level of internal LOC.[1]

Compared to instruments using undefined Likert scales or yes-no items, the ASSC SCAI tends to achieve greater levels of reliability for the following areas:

- Dimension-level Sub-scale Reliability – Each sub-scale generates a Chronbach's Alpha reliability measure of .73 or above (with the accepted standard being 0.7). In addition, the instrument's overall Chronbach's Alpha reliability measure of 0.97 demonstrates exceptionally high levels of reliability.

- Intra-rater Reliability – Levels of inter-rater reliability among independent observers is around 0.9. For teacher surveys, the mean standard deviation for scores is 0.8 on a 5 point scale.

- Inter-dimension Reliability – Ratings across dimensions show a high level of correlation to one another [0.7 – 0.9] (see Footnote 1).

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[1] Adapted from "Examining the Reliability and Validity of the ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI)," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014b (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/research/reliability_validity.html). Copyright 2014 by the Charter College of Education, CSULA. Reprinted with permission.

Interview analysis. For analyses of interview data, the researcher used an inductive process. First, transcripts of all interviews were reviewed several times to obtain a general sense of data. Then, data were analyzed by segmenting and labeling text segments to form descriptions and broad themes. Using codes to describe a segment of text and *in vivo* codes stating participant's actual words, the researcher labeled segments of information throughout the coding process (Creswell, 2008). A second round of coding removed any redundancy in data. Lean coding then enabled the researcher to reduce data to categories, covering more specific broad themes.

Observations. Using information collected through observational checklists and limited descriptive field notes, the researcher culled both objective and subjective data into labels and themes related to the study's research questions. A coding grid organized data, codes, and ideas (i.e., field notes) about codes (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014). This indexing process enabled the researcher to compare codes and observations of etic data for inductive analysis.

Documents. After reading all documents, the researcher identified those primary sources that provided useful information for exploring the study's central phenomenon concerning types of contextual factors that foster student prosocial development and reduced misconduct of middle school students. The researcher then developed a list of categories or themes that emerged during the reading. Through an iterative process, documents were hand-analyzed and coded for recurring major ideas or concepts (Rovai, Baker, and Ponton, 2013).

Role of Researcher

Although having a background in education, the researcher was not employed by

the state of Pennsylvania and was not associated with school districts or the middle schools studied. While serving as an instrument of data collection for interviews and observations, because of the study's design, the researcher presented minimal threat to influencing participant responses in the middle school settings. Interviews were recorded and transcribed as emic data, and for observations, the researcher served as an objective observant.

As the sole reviewer of interviews, observations, and documents, the researcher was directly involved with collecting data and, subsequently, coded attributes presented through resulting data sets. Although gathered as part of the researcher's own educational studies, data were coded objectively through Creswell's (2008) suggested process for coding qualitative data. As an outsider, the researcher acted as a neutral medium through which information was transmitted (McMillan, 2008).

To increase validity of the study's research and findings, the researcher triangulated data gathered from surveys, interviews, observations, and documents. Data from these multiple perspectives enabled the researcher to uncover consistencies and inconsistencies across data sources, in addition to uncovering deeper associations within data.

Chapter Four – Results

This study's results describe patterns of contextual factors in rural middle school environments that may influence student behavior. The focus of this chapter is to present those factors emerging as common in middle school climates with low incidences of student misconduct and those factors emerging as common in middle school climates with high incidences of misconduct. In addition, emerging themes showing significant differences between the two classifications of schools are presented.

Compacted data collection occurred within a 90-day period from November – January, with data originating from an online survey, on-site interviews and observations, and school handbooks. All instruments were informed by subscales of the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). The description of subscales is presented in Table 1. Contextual similarities and differences among schools were explored through interrelated lenses of physical characteristics, shared patterns of behavior (actions taken by an individual), beliefs (how an individual thinks about or perceives things), and language (how an individual talks to others) (Creswell, 2008).

Table 1

Subscales of ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument

Subscale	Description
Physical Appearance	Examines the relationship between the physical characteristics and environment of a school and the climate that it promotes. This dimension includes the degree to which intentional efforts have been made related to the consideration of perceptions of outsiders.
Faculty Relations	Examines the relationship between how members of the faculty relate to one another and its effects on the climate of the school. This dimension includes the degree to which collaboration, respect, capacity to interact, and a sense of collective purpose exist among members of the faculty. It also includes the explicit and implicit expectations among faculty members as to how decisions are made and duties are delegated and performed.
Leadership and Decision Making	Examines relationships among decision-making mechanisms, how administrative authority is manifested, and the climate that is created as a result. This dimension includes the degree to which the collective possesses a shared sense of values and an operational vision. It also explores ways in which the quality of leadership affects school life.
Discipline and Management Environment	Examines the relationship between management and discipline approaches used within the school and the climate that is created as a result. This dimension includes the degree to which management strategies promote higher levels of responsibility and motivation. It also examines teacher-student interactions as a source of management and motivation.
Attitude and Culture	Examines pervasive attitudes and cultures that operate within the school and their relationship to the climate. This dimension explores the degree to which social and/or communal bonds are present within the school, the attitudes that members of the school possess, and the level of pride and ownership they feel. It includes the degree to which efforts in this area are made intentionally or left to chance.

Note. Adapted from "Subscales of the School Climate Assessment Instrument," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/ schoolclimate/assessment/#sub-scales). Copyright 2014 by the Charter College of Education, CSULA. Adapted with permission.

Description of Participants

Participants in this ethnographic study derived from a purposeful sample of six rural public middle school sites in Pennsylvania. Three schools with the fewest incidences of eighth grade misconduct behavior over a three-year period represented low

incidence schools (L1, L2, and L3), while three schools with the highest incidences denoted high incidence schools (H1, H2, and H3). The study population included two groups of individuals: (a) faculty and staff who voluntarily completed the ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument and (b) administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers who were chosen to provide key informant interviews.

The population for the ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument consisted of 81 individuals. Six percent were administrators; 85%, teachers; 5%, non-classroom professional staff; and 4%, other professional staff. Twenty-eight percent had worked 0-5 years in their current position; 36%, 6-20 years; 25%, 11-20 years, and 11%, 21 or more years. Participants from schools with the highest incidences of student misconduct comprised 57% of the sample. Forty-three percent derived from those schools representing the fewest incidences. Survey response rates were 33% or greater for all six schools of the sample.

The focus group for key informant interviews contained 24 individuals (six principals, seven guidance counselors, and 11 teachers). For high incidence schools (H), a combination of three principals, four guidance counselors, and six teachers comprised the sample. Three principals, three guidance counselors, and five teachers represented the sample for low incidence schools (L). Participants for this portion of the study were chosen because they were particularly informative about contextual attributes of middle school environments and would provide a range of understanding to the central phenomenon of students' behavior at this level.

Survey Results

The Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate

Assessment Instrument (SCAI) presented ten questions for each dimension measured: (a) faculty relations, (b) leadership and decision making, (c) discipline and management environment, and (d) attitude and culture. The research team at the ASSC, a division of the Charter College of Education at California State University in Los Angeles, aggregated data independently for the study's six schools. Mean scores of the four dimensions were calculated for each school as well as the aggregate. In addition, the overall social climate rating was compiled through the combined mean of all dimensions for individual schools as well as the aggregate (see Appendix D for summary report). Each of the 40 survey items depicted three levels of performance that characterize overall climate levels for schools:

- Level 3 – intentional;

- Level 2 – semi-intentional; and

- Level 1 – accidental.

Each level of performance was classified by the following descriptive systems: (a) ethos, (b) effect on students, (c) staff relations, (d) general characterization, (e) teachers' orientation toward students and learning, (f) students' view of the classroom dynamic, (g) process for school improvement, and (h) evaluation of performance. A complete description of each system can be found in Appendix E.

To compile data, each school first was appropriately coded by ASCC as either a high incidence school (H1, H2, and H3) or a low incidence school (L1, L2, and L3). Survey question responses then were assigned scores. This was completed by coding each participant's responses according to an analytic trait scale:

- Level 3 equaled five points;

- between Levels 3 and 2 equaled four points;

- Level 2 equaled three points;

- between Levels 2 and 1 equaled two points; and

- Level 1 equaled 1 point.

The mean score for each survey question was obtained by dividing the total number of points for the question by its number of participants. Item mean scores ranged between 5.0 (high) to 1.0 (low). A school with a mean score falling between the ranges of 4.0 – 5.0 had attributes of an "intentional climate." A school with a mean score between the ranges of 2.0 – 4.0 indicated a "semi-intentional climate," while one with a mean score between the ranges of 1.0 – 2.0 suggested an "accidental climate."

Table 2 shows an exemplar survey question for the dimension "Leadership and Decision Making." Response numbers and mean scores are displayed for the six schools, as well as the aggregate mean. The table indicates how schools varied in their mean scores for a question addressing the idea of having a clear mission. For this specific question, H2's mean score of 4.17 indicated the school having an intentional climate concerning its mission and vision.

Table 2

Exemplar Survey Question and Score

	Level 3		Level 2		Level 1	
	High	High-middle	Middle	Middle-low		Low

School has a sense of vision and a mission that is shared by all staff.		School has a set of policies, a written mission, but no cohesive vision.		School has policies that are used inconsistently.		

	Total N^a	H1 N	H2 N	H3 N	L1 N	L2 N	L3 N
Low	11	6	0	0	1	3	1
Middle-low	12	1	3	1	2	4	1
Middle	19	4	0	7	3	3	2
High-middle	25	0	10	2	3	6	4
High	12	0	10	1	0	0	1
Mean	3.19^b	1.82	4.17	3.27	2.89	2.75	3.33

Note. H1, H2, and H3 = schools with high incidences of misconduct; L1, L2, and L3 = schools with low incidences of misconduct.
[a]*N* = number of responses.
[b]To obtain total and individual school mean scores, response numbers (*n*) first were multiplied by their corresponding level values (Low = 1; Middle-low = 2; Middle = 3; High-middle = 4; and High = 5), totaled, and then divided by the number of responses.

To present findings in a manner that addressed the study's central research question and subquestions, the researcher formed two groupings of compiled data: high incidence schools (H1, H2, and H3) and low incidence schools (L1, L2, and L3). To investigate emerging themes of significant difference between the two classifications of schools, the researcher compared means of ten coded data sets for each of the four survey dimensions. As suggested by ASSC, "[e]xamining dimension-level data [is] useful in identifying areas of need" (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014). Such insights served two purposes: (a) providing a broad basis to explore patterns of school contextual factors that may have possible influences on student behavior and (b) establishing contextual groupings by which the researcher triangulated additional data

gathered through interviews, observations, and documents.

Faculty relations. Figure 1 shows results of examining the relationship between how members of faculty relate to one another and its effects on the climate of the school.
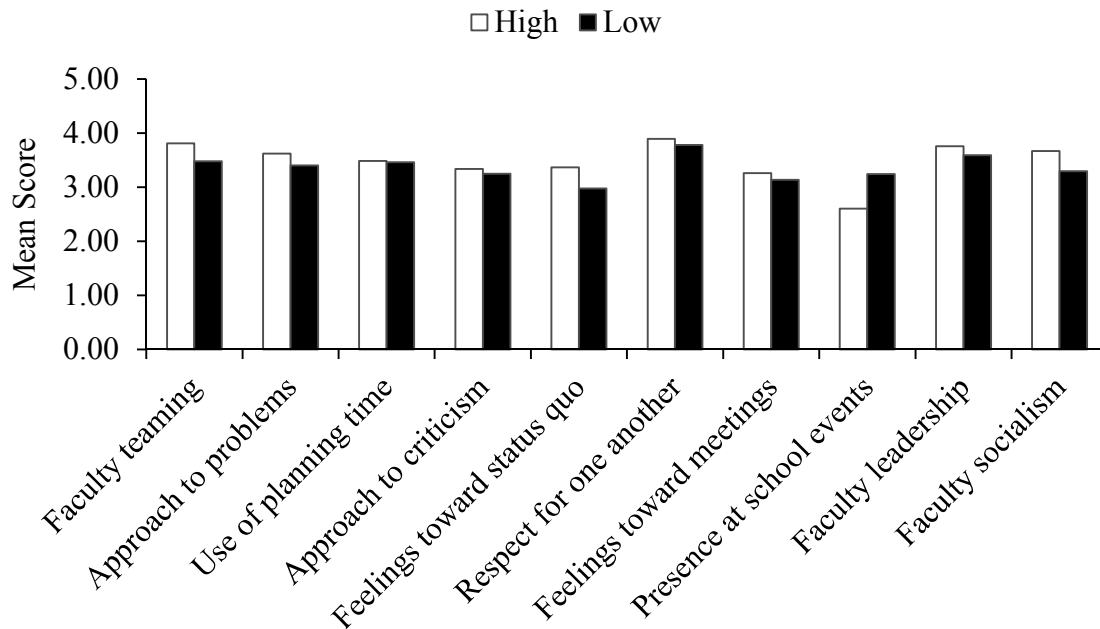
Figure 1. Faculty relations. This figure shows the degree to which collaboration, respect, capacity to interact, and a sense of collective purpose exist among members of the faculty. Adapted from "Subscales of the School Climate Assessment Instrument," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/ schoolclimate/assessment/#sub-scales). Copyright 2014 by the Charter College of Education, CSULA. Adapted with permission.

As shown in Figure 1, high incidence schools scored above means of low incidence schools on 90% of questions concerning faculty relations. Mean scores of high incidence schools indicated a Level 2 climate, suggesting the relationship between faculty members was semi-intentional. However, lower incidence schools showed a higher mean than high incidence schools for faculty attendance at school events.

Leadership and decision making. Figure 2 displays results of examining relationships among decision-making mechanisms, how administrative authority is

manifested, and the climate that is created as a result.
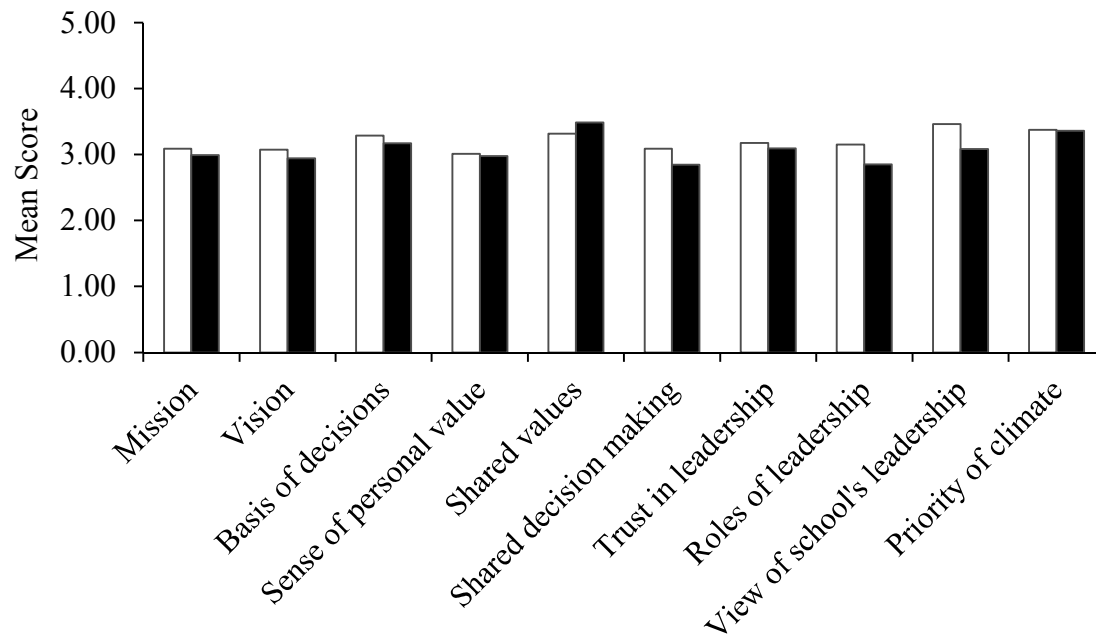
Figure 2. Leadership and decision making. This figure includes the degree to which the collective possesses a shared sense of values and an operational vision. It also explores ways in which the quality of leadership affects school life. Adapted from "Subscales of the School Climate Assessment Instrument," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/#sub-scales). Copyright 2014 by the Charter College of Education, CSULA. Adapted with permission.

Response averages for both high and low incident schools revealed consistent means near 3.0, suggesting both classifications of schools had semi-intentional climates for this dimension. The most noticeable gap between means occurred for the question asking participants' views of school leadership (see Figure 2). While high incidence schools leaned toward a more intentional climate, responses of low incidence schools revealed they viewed leadership as being highly political about how resources are allocated and as often deflecting responsibility.

Discipline and management environment. The relationship between management and discipline approaches used within the school and the climate that is

created as a result is presented in Figure 3.
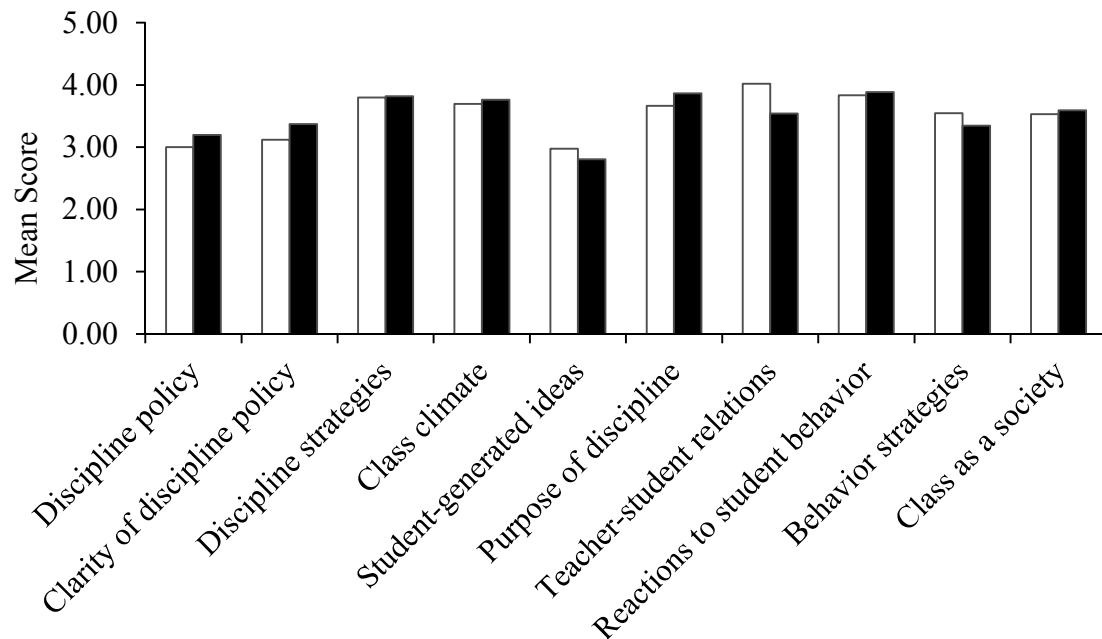
Figure 3. Discipline and management environment. This figure includes the degree to which management strategies promote higher levels of responsibility and motivation. It also examines teacher-student interactions as a source of management and motivation. Adapted from "Subscales of the School Climate Assessment Instrument," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/#sub-scales). Copyright 2014 by the Charter College of Education, CSULA. Adapted with permission.

Most response averages for discipline and management environment consistently fell into the range of semi-intentional climates for both high incidence and low-incidence schools. However, the area of teacher-student interactions showed the greatest contrast. High incidence schools elicited an intentional climate for interactions between teachers and students, supporting the question's premise that these interactions would be typically described as supportive and respectful. On the other hand, while both groups produced their lowest means in the area of having students generate ideas for rules, low incidence schools showed the lowest mean, leaning toward an accidental climate for this area.

Attitude and culture. Pervasive attitudes and cultures that operate within the

school and their relationship to the climate are shown in Figure 4.
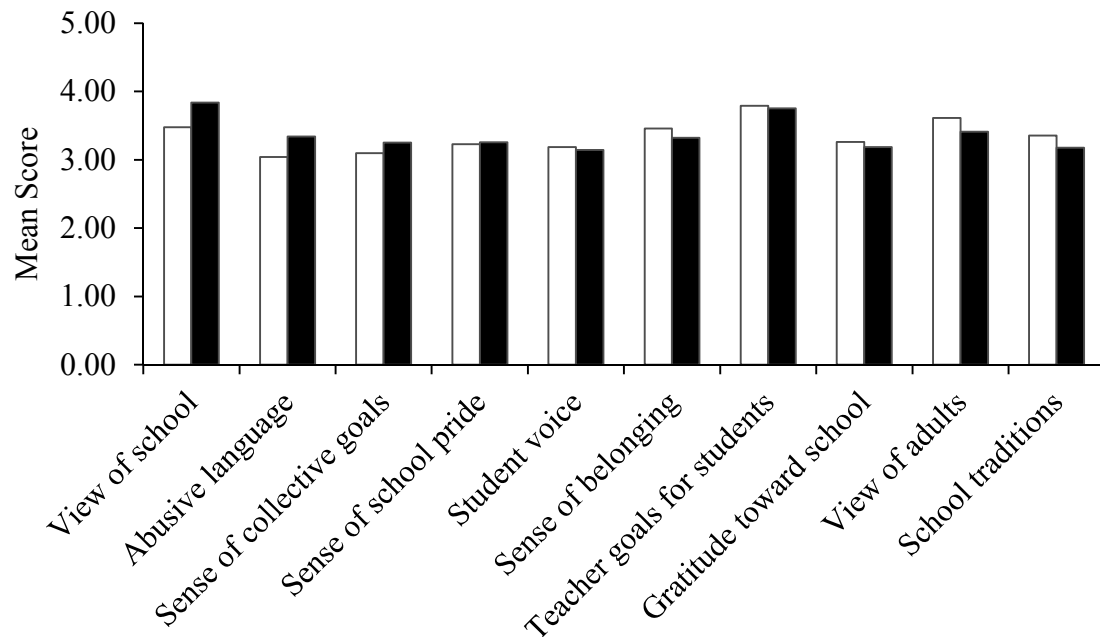
Figure 4. Attitude and culture. This figure explores the degree to which social and/or communal bonds are present within the school, the attitudes that members of the school possess, and the level of pride and ownership they feel. It includes the degree to which efforts in this area are made intentionally or left to chance. Adapted from "Subscales of the School Climate Assessment Instrument," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/#sub-scales). Copyright 2014 by the Charter College of Education, CSULA. Adapted with permission.

Of the four dimensions surveyed, attitude and culture showed the most

consistency for mean scores, with both groupings supporting semi-intentional climates.

For two items, faculty felt students speak of their schools in neutral or mixed terms and

some students, not all, have a voice that is listened to and represented. Interestingly,

faculty of both high and low incidence schools leaned toward having high expectations

for the majority of students, not just those showing promise.

Additional Findings

While conducting on-site interviews and observations to collect data for the study's sample, the researcher suspected one school (H2) gave indications of being a significant outlier. Survey results further supported the suspicion of such an anomaly. For each survey dimension, mean scores of H2 were higher than any other school of the sample. In fact, the overall social climate rating of H2 (4.06) was higher than the aggregate of all schools combined (3.45).

Therefore, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between faculty relations, leadership and decision making, discipline and management environment, and attitude and culture in high incidence schools compared to low incidence schools. With H2 removed from the group of high incidence schools, an additional paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the same variables. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to explore if H2 had a statistically significant impact on the high incidence school grouping.

Data derived from the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) matched requirements for these additional measurements. Data were normally distributed, interval, and scores were paired in sets according to contextual dimensions. Furthermore, the paired samples *t*-test supported this study's smaller sample size ($N = 81$), especially because the within-pair correlation coefficient was high (de Winter, 2013).

Faculty relations. There was not a statistically significant mean difference between high incidence schools and low incidence schools ($M = -0.12$, $SD = 0.78$) for the dimension of faculty relations, 95% CI [-0.68, 0.44], $t(9) = 1.26$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = -0.15$.

With H2 removed ($M = 0.18$, $SD = 1.25$), faculty relations also did not elicit a significant mean difference, 95% CI [−0.71, 1.07], $t(9) = 1.54$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = 0.14$).

Results implied that a difference in the dimension of faculty relations between high and low incidence schools was not statistically significant. Likewise, H2 appeared not to have an effect on faculty relations for the high incidence grouping.

Leadership and decision making. A statistically significant mean difference existed between high incidence schools and low incidence schools ($M = −0.12$, $SD = 0.22$) for the dimension of leadership and decision making, 95% CI [−0.28, 0.04], $t(9) = −2.50$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = −0.55$. Furthermore, leadership and decision making also elicited a significant mean difference ($M = 0.35$, $SD = 0.29$) when H2 was removed from the measurement, 95% CI [0.14, 0.56], $t(9) = 6.12$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = 1.20$).

Results suggested a difference in leadership and decision making between high and low incidence schools was statistically significant, whether H2 was removed or not. In high incidence schools, these elements revealed a medium effect when using Cohen's (1988) conventions. With H2 removed, leadership and decision making in low incidence schools suggested a large effect, indicating that H2 may have affected the mean increase for high incidence schools.

Discipline and management environment. There was no mean difference between high incidence schools and low incidence schools ($M = 0.00$, $SD = 0.45$) for the dimension of discipline and management environment, 95% CI [−0.32, 0.32], $t(9) = 0.01$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = 0.00$. In contrast, discipline and management environment did elicit a significant mean difference between high and low incidence schools ($M = 0.30$, $SD = 0.66$) with H2 removed from the measurement, 95% CI [−0.17, 0.77], $t(9) = 3.56$, $p \leq$

0.05, $d = 0.45$).

Initial results proposed that for high incidence and low incidence schools, the dimension of discipline and management environment did not have a statistically significant effect on the mean difference between the two groupings. However, with H2 removed, factors of discipline and management in low incidence schools showed a medium effect (Cohen, 1988) and inferred that H2 may have influenced this dimension's mean increase for high incidence schools.

Attitude and culture. A statistically significant mean difference did not exist between high incidence schools and low incidence schools ($M = 0.02$, $SD = 0.34$) for the dimension of attitude and culture, 95% CI [−0.22, 0.26], $t(9) = 0.29$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = 0.06$. In contrast, attitude and culture did elicit a significant mean difference between high and low incidence schools ($M = 0.30$, $SD = 0.34$) with H2 removed from the measurement, 95% CI [0.06, 0.54], $t(9) = 4.80$, $p \leq 0.05$, $d = 0.88$).

While a difference in the dimension of attitude and culture between high and low incidence schools was not statistically significant, the mean difference between groupings did reveal a large effect with H2 removed (Cohen, 1988). As with the dimension of leadership and decision making, elements of H2's attitude and culture may have affected the mean increase for high incidence schools.

Summary

Data gathered from the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) presented broad contextual patterns that served as units of analysis for factors common among middle school climates with either high or low incidences of student misconduct. These contextual patterns were categorized within

the dimensions of faculty relations, leadership and decision making, discipline and management environment, and attitude and culture. A perceived discrepancy created by one high incidence school (H2) led the researcher to conduct a paired-samples *t*-test on dimensional data in order to measure statistically significant mean differences between the two school groupings.

For faculty relations, high incidence schools scored above the means of their counterparts for all but one contextual area, and such findings indicated a semi-intentional climate for this grouping. No statistical difference was found between the two groupings. Concerning the contextual area of leadership and decision making, both high and low incidence schools showed consistent means and were both classified as semi-intentional climates. However, with the removal of H2 from data, low incidence schools elicited a large effect (Cohen, 1988), suggesting leadership and decision making made significant differences in their climates. Once again, semi-intentional climates surfaced for both groupings under the contextual area of discipline and management environment. When H2 was removed, findings revealed that factors of discipline and management in low incidence schools showed a medium effect on these climates (Cohen, 1988). Attitude and culture revealed the most consistency for mean scores (with both school groupings supporting semi-intentional climates). However, while this dimension had effects on climates for both groupings, low incidence schools experienced a larger statistically significant effect with H2 removed (Cohen, 1988).

Interview Results

The researcher conducted 24 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with administrators and teachers in the six middle schools representing the study's sample.

Those interviewed included six principals, six guidance counselors, and two teachers from each school (except for one school where the researcher was able to interview only one teacher). Interview protocol asked participants semi-structured questions and follow-up probes in order to explore their views concerning faculty relations, leadership and decision making, discipline and management environment, and attitude and culture of their respective school climates.

The researcher audio recorded and transcribed all interview questions and responses as emic data. Field notes taken during interviews, impromptu conversations, and school tours by the principal provided additional etic data. Data analysis was an inductive process. Transcripts first were reviewed several times to obtain a general sense of data. Then, texts were segmented through a color-coding process—labeling patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language concerning factors associated with participants' respective school climates. This coding helped to form descriptions and broad themes for the contextual areas indicated. Several additional rounds of lean coding removed any redundancy in data and reduced data to categories covering the study's more specific themes. This coding of themed data allowed triangulation to item level responses of the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI).

To provide focus toward the study's research questions, resulting data were presented by themes. To assist analysis, data were further subdivided as (a) responses of administration/guidance and then teachers from high incidence schools (H1, H2, H3) and (b) responses of administration/guidance and then teachers from low incidence schools (L1, L2, L3). These divisions enabled the researcher to compare data not only between the two categories of school personnel but also among the six school climates

constituting high and low incidence settings.

As with the study's survey instrument, the researcher discovered one school (H2) emerged as a significant outlier in its responses. Oftentimes, school personnel from H2 shared unique insights not produced by any other school in either grouping of high or low incidence schools. Therefore, when appropriate, responses and thematic trends from H2 are presented separately in order to explore this school's unique phenomena.

Faculty relations. Interviews examined the relationship between how members of the faculty relate to one another and its effects on the climate of the school (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c). Questions focused on ideas such as collaboration, competency of administration and teachers, collective purpose to change the status quo, faculty meetings, and leadership opportunities. See Appendix F for a summary of questions and responses for faculty relations.

Question 1 addressed faculty collaboration to administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers. Typically, both high and low incidence schools had high percentages of collaboration or teaming, especially at grade levels. As a follow-up probe, the researcher found that all schools had either common planning times or other designated times throughout the week for such opportunities. In contrast, one administrator and one teacher of H1 placed collaboration at the lower end of the range—20% and 50%, respectively. In addition, the administrator of H2 viewed this entity as a time of "distributed leadership and putting power in the teacher's hands."

Questions 2 and 3 dealt with the competency rating of teachers by administrators and guidance counselors as well as the competency rating of administration by teachers. No significant findings emerged from either group, except an L3 teacher extended the

competency rating scale to include a shared value: "trusts us . . . doesn't micromanage."

Question 4 asked both groups to articulate change-minded ideas needed to help make their schools better for students. Most ideas for both school groupings were wide-ranging—from improving "the disconnect between teachers" (H1) to "consistency of leadership" (L1) to "a more positive faculty" (H3) to "clear guidelines" (L1). One analogous idea resonated across both high and low incidence schools as well as both groupings of school personnel: the connection of "the school" with kids, family, and community. While some staff expressed this idea as more supportive home environments, others saw the concept as more outreach and collaboration with parents and community. One teacher of a low incidence school (L1) phrased the idea as having "a climate back that is embedded with kids outside of instruction." An administrator of a high incidence school (H2) coined the idea as "finding that *magic* that connects to the community and families."

For Question 5, a question for administration about protocol and attendance at faculty meetings, no significant differences or similarities were found between the two school groupings. Faculty meetings were mandatory by contract for all schools but one (L2), and for this school, attendance was "assumed and majority attend."

The final question, Question 6, addressed leadership opportunities for teachers and was asked to both sets of personnel from each school group. Two distinct trends emerged. First, all schools but one (H2) similarly coined leadership opportunities with words like

- "open to a lot of things" (H1);
- "no formal structure" (H3);

- "not many opportunities" (L1);

- "intrinsically motivated" (L2);

- "if there's an idea" (H3); or

- "can take an idea and go with it."

For these schools, leadership opportunities were available but not necessarily systemically approached to produce faculty socialism, the idea measured in the counterpart survey question for this topic. On the other hand, leadership opportunities at H2 appeared to be more directed and organized with "a committee system to cover everything from behavior, academics, clubs, school spirit, or organizations." Whether leadership opportunities involved appointed positions or volunteers, in this school, Professional Learning Communities served as the foundation for operation. The philosophy behind such opportunities was that they were ongoing, cyclical, and "embedded throughout what [they did there]" to build capacity.

Summary. For the dimension of faculty relations, both school groupings mostly supported high percentages of collaboration occurring within their schools. H2 took the idea beyond collaboration and teaming, terming the interaction as "distributed leadership." Both high and low incidence schools consistently viewed administration and teachers as having above average levels of competence. Across both grouping, wide-ranging change ideas for school improvement existed, but many focused on "the kid-parent-community" connection. The greatest distinction occurred not between school groupings but between the collective of schools and one high incidence school. For the collective, leadership opportunities mostly were available but were more self-directed and self-driven. For the one high incidence school (H2), leadership opportunities were

organized, planned, and designed to build leaders naturally within the school climate.

Leadership and decision making. Interviews investigated relationships among decision-making mechanisms, how administrative authority is manifested, and the climate that is created as a result (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c). Questions focused on ideas such as school mission and vision, recognition of staff, shared values, trust, representative decision making, staff response to leadership, and leadership's sensitivity to climate. See Appendix G for a summary of questions and responses for leadership and decision making.

Question 1 addressed procedures for creating mission and vision. For all high incidence schools except one (H2), neither administration/guidance nor teachers articulated a clear process, and many saw mission and vision as district, not school based. Accordingly, high incidence teachers also viewed the components as "coming from on high." The lead administrator of H2, however, viewed the question as a school-based initiative rooted in very specific needs of the middle school building. After mission and vision were naturally embedded as part of this school's culture, this same administrator viewed such components serving as "more of a guide than a sage." For low incidence schools, administration/guidance knew the process of creation, and teachers knew this process was led by committee.

For Question 2, focusing on teachers repeating the school mission, all high incidence teachers except those of H2 openly admitted to not being able to articulate the mission. One jokingly stated, "Hell, no! A resounding hell no! One exists because I'm sure it's embroidered on a polo shirt somewhere." However, teachers of H2 tried to articulate mission in terms of their school and its students:

- "No, but the abbreviated version is *Every child succeeding in every way*"; and

- "No, but the mission is students—whatever it takes to give them what they need."

Similarly, low incidence teachers really could not articulate the mission but knew where it was ("posted on the wall in my room" or "on board minutes").

Question 3 dealt with determining major decisions in the school. Both high and low incidence administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers generally saw collaboration as being the driving element for making decisions. However, the administrator at H2 addressed collaboration a step further, explaining decision making as the development of "think tanks." Naturally using the pronoun "we" when sharing an example of a collective decision, this administrator described the process in three discursive phases based on "the best interest of the kids":

1. What is it that works about . . . ?

2. What does not work specifically?

3. If you had your wish, what would you like to see?

For Question 4, addressing faculty influence on administrative decisions, administrators of both high and low incidence schools viewed faculty opinions as important. Most stated as having open-door policies and being open to suggestions, "especially if solutions to problems" (H3). One administrator from a low incidence school saw the role as being that of a "collaborative bridge-builder" (L3).

Question 5 asked all personal from both groupings to articulate two guiding values believed in by the faculty. No significant differences surfaced between high and low incidence schools. Among all schools, guiding values were based on the premise of what is best for students. While some individuals took longer than others to articulate this

idea, all eventually did. Interestingly, this value did not always surface quickly as an embedded force for answering other comparable interview questions.

For Question 6 about the occurrence of shared decision making in each school, no significant patterns were found between low and high incidence schools or among personnel groups. Similarly, Question 7 that addressed leadership accountability to find ways to "make things happen" showed no significant differences. In both school groupings, administrators "made it happen" by splitting costs between peers, budgeting it, tapping into extra pools of money, writing grants, or paying out of their own pockets.

Question 8 was addressed to teachers only and asked for a rating level of respect accorded by staff toward the principal. While the majority of teachers rated their respective principals as well above average, both teachers at H2 were the only ones to rate a principal at the highest level, *highly respected*. In a similar fashion, Question 9, asking how often interactions occur with students about school, was consistent for all groups—*daily*. In fact, two administrators coined their experiences as "A lot . . . maybe to the teachers' chagrin" (L2) and "I rarely miss a middle school lunch period" (L3).

Summary. For the dimension of leadership and decision making, high incidence school personnel articulated the process of creating mission and vision, but many expressed that both entities were imparted upon them and not school-driven. Personnel of low incidence schools knew the process more clearly. As an outlier, H2 was the only school to view mission and vision through the lens of the school community. Similarly, articulating mission was a challenge for all teachers, although all personnel of H2 focused their responses in terms of their school and its students. Collaborating was a commonality to determining major decisions in all schools. Once again, H2 added another level to the

process. This time, "think tanks" became an administrative tool to this school's decision making process. Both high and low incidence administrations viewed faculty opinions as important and influential. For all personnel groups, guiding values were similar, with the focused audience of these values being students and all school administrations finding ways to "make the impossible happen." When being rated by teachers, these same administrations were seen as "well above average," with H2 teachers viewing their principal at the highest level of "highly respected." Finally, at all schools, interactions with students about their personal school experience occurred daily.

Discipline and management environment. Interviews for this dimension explored the relationship between management and discipline approaches used within the school and the climate that is created as a result (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c). Questions focused on ideas such as consistency and clear expectations of discipline policy, effective discipline, student-generated input and ideas, discipline for functionality, teacher-student interactions, and focus on problematic behavior. See Appendix H for a summary of questions and responses for discipline and management environment.

Question 1 asked all personnel from both school groupings to rate how consistently discipline policies were followed in their schools. Distinct divisions emerged between administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers for some schools. For H1, the principal viewed this consistency as being "probably a 9"; the guidance counselor regarded it as "about 6 or 7." Likewise, while one teacher from H1 rated consistency as a 6, another rated it as a 9. For one low incidence school (L1), such similar patterns surfaced. The principal rated consistency as occurring "every day"; the guidance

counselor, "between an 8 and a 9." In contrast, one teacher of L1 ranked consistency as being "50% handbook, 50% administrator's call" and another gave a "4" rating.

Question 2 brought this idea of consistency of behavior expectations to the classroom level. Teachers of both high and low incidence schools addressed consistency in terms of general rules, grade-level or team rules, and individual teaching styles and expectations. As a whole, responses of administrators and guidance counselors from both groupings echoed similar sentiments: "as close to a consistent approach as possible with some uniqueness" or "individual expectations differ but general rules still there."

In terms of having student-generated ideas for rules, which was addressed to teachers with Question 3, no patterns surfaced, but a majority of teachers thought students had no real involvement in the process. Concerning the idea of effective discipline, Question 4 was addressed to administrators and guidance counselors only, asking whether teachers viewed discipline as punishment or as a way to change behavior. A majority of responses from high incidence schools indicated they thought teachers viewed discipline as punishment, although the principal from H2 suggested this was "not punishment for a crime but a teachable moment for most." This view also was evident in several low incidence schools. A guidance counselor (L3) believed teachers were "not ogres but [held] kids accountable."

For Question 5 focusing on teachers' approaches to keeping students controlled, the principal, guidance counselor, and one teacher of H1 saw teachers as "using strict rules," being quick to "push the student off on someone else," or having "very little bend and flexibility." In contrast, most low incidence schools saw their teachers as being part of cultures that were "nice schools with established routines" and "good kids." H2

emerged as an outlier for this question. The principal, guidance counselors, and both teachers saw control happening through things such as "compassion," "promoting interaction," and "emphasizing student learning."

Questions 6 and 7 were asked of all administrators and guidance counselors and dealt with teacher-student interactions—first as individuals and then in terms of student problematic behavior. An analogous pattern emerged between one high incidence and one low incidence school. H1 administrators and guidance counselors rated teacher-student interactions as "fair but teacher-dominated." When asked about teacher reactions to problematic behavior, these same individuals said teachers showed anger and frustration in their reactions. In L2, teacher-student interactions were based on "support and good intentions" but were teacher-dominated. Just as was expressed with teacher reactions of H1, teachers of L2 were seen as being reactive and showing anger and frustration in such situations.

Summary. For the dimension of discipline and management environment, two dichotomies emerged. First, administration and guidance counselors of both high and low incidence schools thought discipline policies were followed to a greater degree than did their teaching counterparts. Second, schools having teacher-student interactions that were "fair but teacher-dominated" also had teachers surfacing anger and frustration in reaction to problematic behaviors. Consistencies for this dimension also existed between high and low incidence schools. All personal in all schools saw the idea of behavior expectations at the classroom level as being a generalized approach to basic rules with the added element of teacher uniqueness. They also concurred that teachers, as a whole, did not have students actively involved in the rule-making process. The major contrast between

both school groupings surfaced in teachers' approaches to keeping students controlled. High incidence schools named strict rules and no flexibility, while low incidence schools admitted to having positive cultures with good kids. One high incidence school (H2) separated itself from others, focusing on the individual teacher showing compassion to students and stimulating engagement in terms of their learning.

Attitude and culture. Interviews for this dimension examined pervasive attitudes and cultures that operate within the school and their relationship to the climate (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c). Questions focused on ideas such as school as community, avoidance of abusive language, expectations for students, student voice, and student comfort in adult conversations. See Appendix I for a summary of questions and responses for attitude and culture.

Question 1 was the only question in this dimension addressed to administration and guidance counselors. When asked if teachers in their schools generally believed that all students can do well, all personnel responded affirmatively except for the principal and guidance counselor of H1.

The remaining questions were addressed solely to teachers. For Question 2, addressing students' community-connection to their schools, all teachers but one saw students feeling like they were part of a community that was "their school." In terms of students self-correcting peers, which was the focus of Question 3, these same teachers did not see students avoiding issues with peers but often "tempering themselves" (L1) to the idea in "pockets here and there" (L2) and "on a limited basis" (H1). Questions 4 and 5 focused on students' level of comfort with adults in the school buildings. For Question 4, all teachers believed students felt they had a least one or two adults in their schools who

would truly listen to them. When respondents to Question 5 were asked if students then would generally seek out adults in their schools for advice, the majority of teachers thought most students do, at least with certain individuals.

Summary. For the dimension of attitude and culture, a majority of answers for all questions elicited positive responses by all personnel in both school groupings. The only distinction occurred in responses to Question 1 by the principal and guidance counselor of H1. Both were not convinced teachers in their school generally believed all students could do well. Without further elaborating, both individuals immediately answered, "No." The researcher, however, in gathering responses to other questions by personnel from this school realized that polarized approaches and ideas existed in their climate.

Observations

On-site observations were conducted for each school of the sample. The researcher gained perspectives of each environment through naturalistic observations, recording reflective field notes and walk-thru observation checklists (see Appendix C for observation items). At minimum, all six principals gave the researcher extensive tours of their respective buildings. In one building (H2), the principal invited the researcher to personally explore this school's environment and build rapport with school personnel.

Two areas of the observation checklist instrument—faculty relations and discipline environment—were unable to be addressed in any of the schools. This was attributed either to scheduling conflicts/opportunities during on-site visits or to each school's specific protocol for when, how long, and who or what may be observed.

Using information collected through observational checklists and descriptive field notes, the researcher collected both objective and subjective data for the dimension of

physical appearance. Although not part of the researcher's survey instrument, this

dimension most always is addressed by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate

(ASSC) in its evaluations of school climates. Figure 5 displays results of a coding grid for

the physical characteristics of high and low incidence schools.
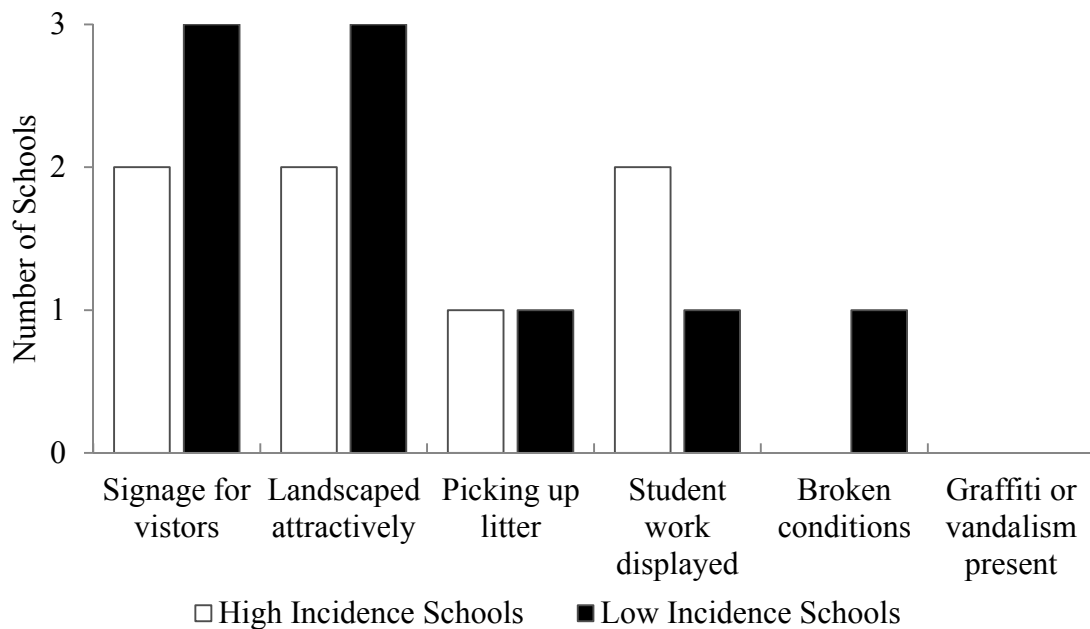
Figure 5. Physical characteristics. This figure examines the relationship between the
physical characteristics and environment of a school and the climate that it promotes. It
includes the degree to which intentional efforts have been made related to the
consideration of perceptions of outsiders. Adapted from "Subscales of the School Climate
Assessment Instrument," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014c
(http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/#sub-scales). Copyright 2014
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As shown in Figure 5, all low incidence schools had outward protocol in place to

make visitors feel welcomed and to suggest first-impression cohesiveness. No schools

showed signs of vandalism or graffiti, although the researcher encountered one high

incidence school (H2) that did use student "chalk graffiti" as a tool for promoting positive

behavior. High incidence schools showed a tendency to display student work more

readily. However, the researcher observed that, once again, H2 was the school with the most acknowledgements for all types of student-generated efforts.

Documents

With the assistance of each school administration, the researcher obtained school/student handbooks from all six schools. These public documents contained information concerning notable attributes comprising each school's organizational environment and protocol for orderliness, discipline, and behavior. The researcher examined documents (including an analysis of word choices and overall tone) to add insight for answering the study's central question and subquestions. After reading all documents, the researcher developed a list of categories that emerged during the reading:

- general information,

- school-wide protocols,

- code of conduct, and

- disciplinary systems.

Through an iterative process, documents then were hand-analyzed and coded for recurring themes within these four categories. The following four figures compare and contrast these themes among high and low incidence schools.

General information. Goals and values of the school and its personnel for supporting student success, engagement, and participation in the learning environment are shown in Figure 6.
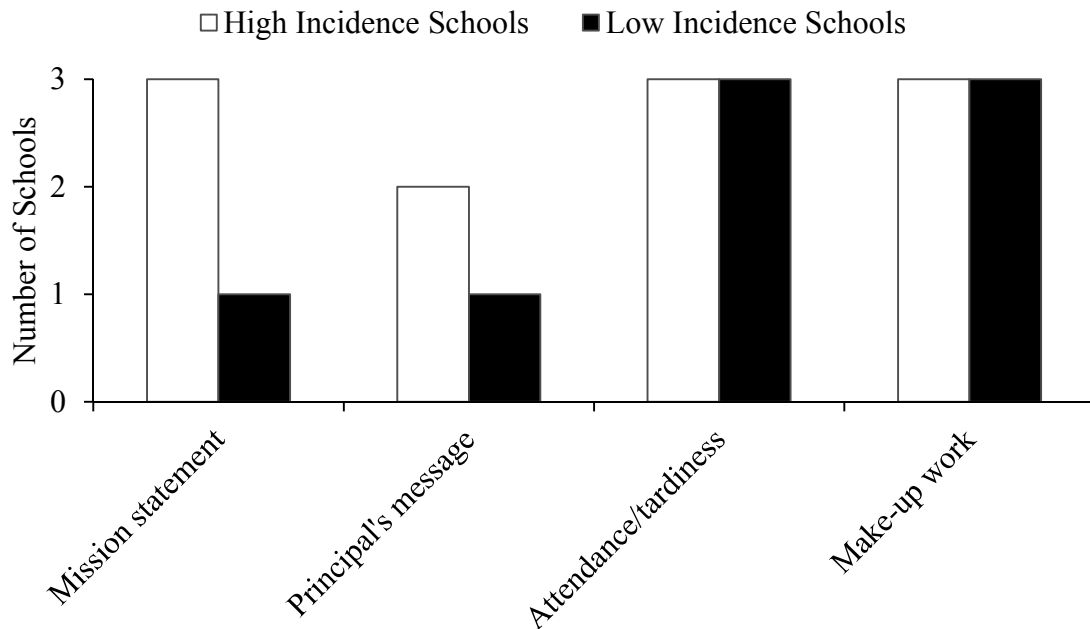
Figure 6. General information. This figure shows attributes of goals and values represented in student handbooks. Included are personnel values that support student success, engagement, and participation in the learning environment.

While all three high incidence schools presented mission statements in their handbooks and each statement addressed academics in some manner, behavior was attended to with varying degrees of specificity:

- "social potential of students" (H1);

- "strong emphasis on community, empathy, enthusiasm, integrity, leadership, loyalty, resiliency, and respect" (H2); and

- "life success . . . building the future one learner at a time" (H3).

The only low incidence school with a mission statement (L3) added "to develop abilities to become a productive citizen." Of the collective, H2 was the lone school whose mission statement focused on specific character traits, having word choices that served to, in the school's own words, promote "creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-

management" in both students and teachers.

Two high incidence schools (H1 and H3) contained a principal's message in their handbooks. For both schools, these letters closed with a similar phrase: "look[ing] forward to a positive and productive school year." However, each letter also differed. H1's phrases such as "information about daily operations" and "somewhat comprehensive review of board policies" suggested a more formal, distant approach to its middle school audience. In contrast, wordings like "providing each student," "serving the whole child," and "working in partnership" served to connect H3 with students, families, and the community. Even more personal, the only low incidence school with a principal's message (L2) emphasized "a family-like environment" and "opening a new chapter of our life."

Both high and low incidence schools articulated protocols for attendance/tardiness and make-up work. A high incidence school (H2) offset its list of parameters with logical and emotional reasoning, addressing regular attendance as "a prerequisite for good school performance" and hoping the school could "work together [with parents] in the best interest of the students." A low incidence school (L2) had strict, time-guided policies while another (L1) placed this responsibility on students with phrasings such as "students have the right" and "students are responsible." Similarly, L3 rested responsibility on students but added parents to encourage "patterns of regular and faithful attendance that carry over into adult life."

School-wide protocols. Policies and procedures designed to ensure student safety as well as orderliness of the school environment are displayed in Figure 7.
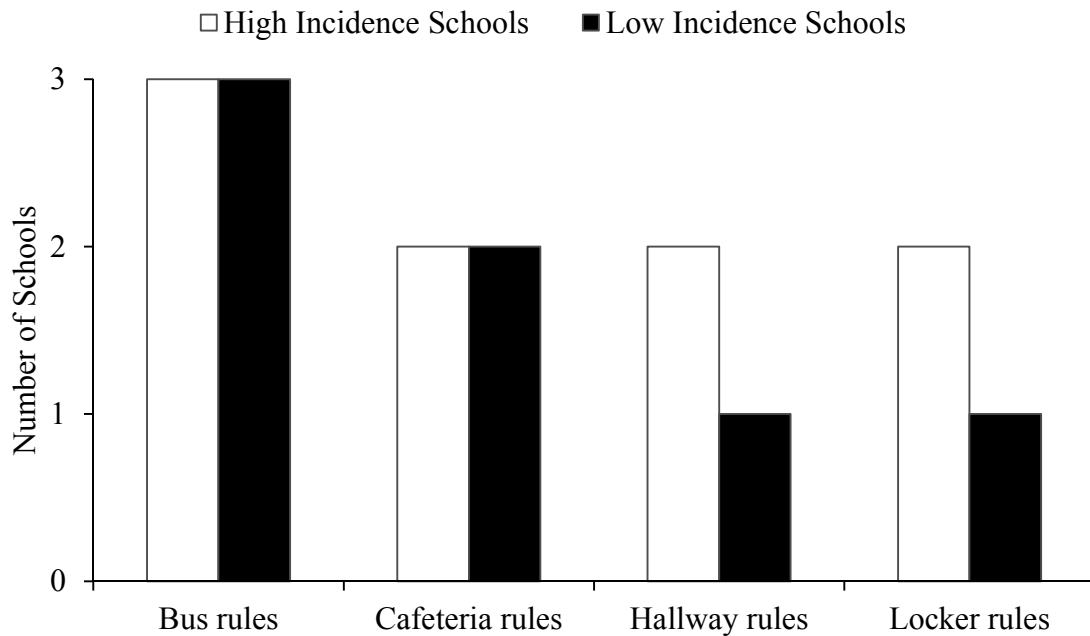
Figure 7. School-wide protocols. This figure denotes policies and procedures, shown in student handbooks, designed to ensure student safety as well as orderliness of school environments.

For high incidence schools, approaches to school-wide protocols differed for all areas. For example, H1 presented cafeteria and hallway expectations as short imperative statements—"follow the routine" or "leave personal space." While H2 provided lists of procedural rules for areas such as bus behavior, each rule then was further supported by a general description for why it was necessary (e.g., "In rural areas, many low hanging tree branches often come in close contact with the side of a school bus"). Likewise, H3 also added a general description to its bus rule list but in a more generic form—bus behavior as an extension of expected school behavior. This type of description by H3 was only used for bus protocols. Rules for the cafeteria, hallways, and lockers were not addressed, except that locker visits were determined by grade-level teams.

Low incidence schools, although slightly different in presentations of their

protocols, evoked stronger tones. Rules and procedures for bus and cafeteria behaviors
were specific and commanding:

- "expected to act";

- "students must";

- "students shall";

- "be. . ."; or

- "ask. . . ."

For these low incidence schools, infractions resulted in consequences of progressive
severity—from a verbal warning to a meeting with the principal to a loss of privileges.

Code of conduct. Student behavioral expectations intended to support an
atmosphere of learning that fosters dignity, commitment, and seriousness of purpose are
shown in Figure 8.
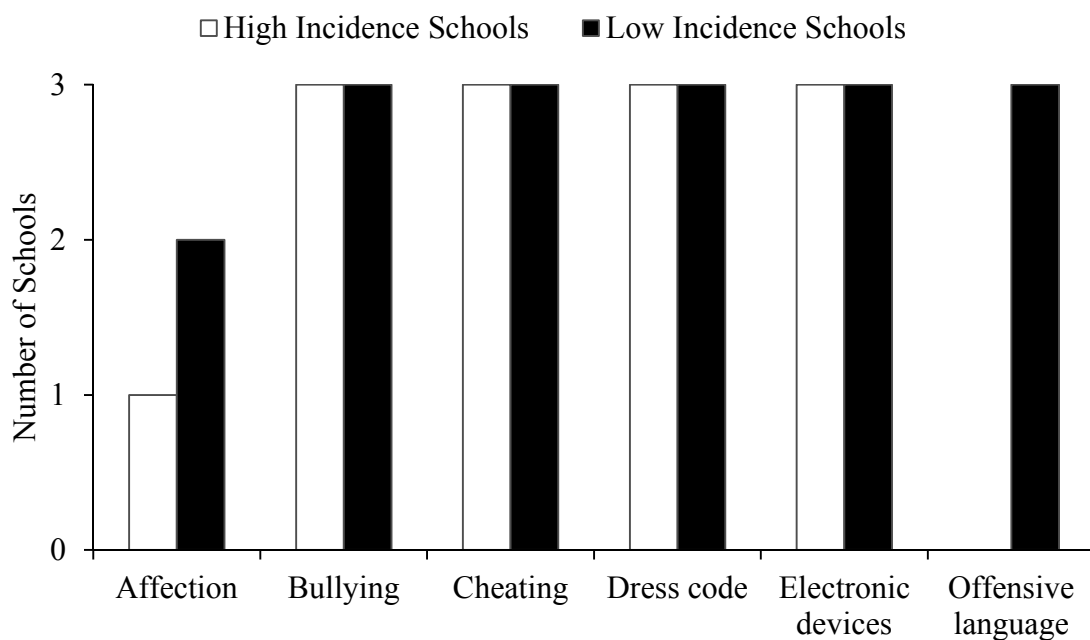
Figure 8. Code of conduct. This figure, as represented in student handbooks, displays
student behavioral expectations that are intended to support an atmosphere of learning
that fosters dignity, commitment, and seriousness of purpose.

The theme of behavioral expectations was most consistently found in both high and low incidence schools, even though presentations of policy details and consequences of infractions differed slightly. For all schools, codes of conduct about bullying, cheating, and attire were framed by district expectations, as were consequences. Use of electronic devices, however, appeared to be created by school-driven policies. All schools but one (H3) required that electronic devices be turned off during the school day. For H3, electronic devices were permitted but were not to be turned on unless "being used for instructional purposes and/or at the discretion of the teacher." At this same school, students were permitted to use devices "at lunch, during recess, and while waiting in the morning and afternoon in the cafeteria." While policies for offensive language were not found in any of the high incidence schools, when addressed in low incidence schools, the topic simply was handled as one or two brief statements. Overall, though, low incidence schools presented the most specific and detailed policies for all behaviors.

Disciplinary systems. School policies for developing and maintaining a climate of orderliness, respect, and responsibility are indicated in Figure 9.
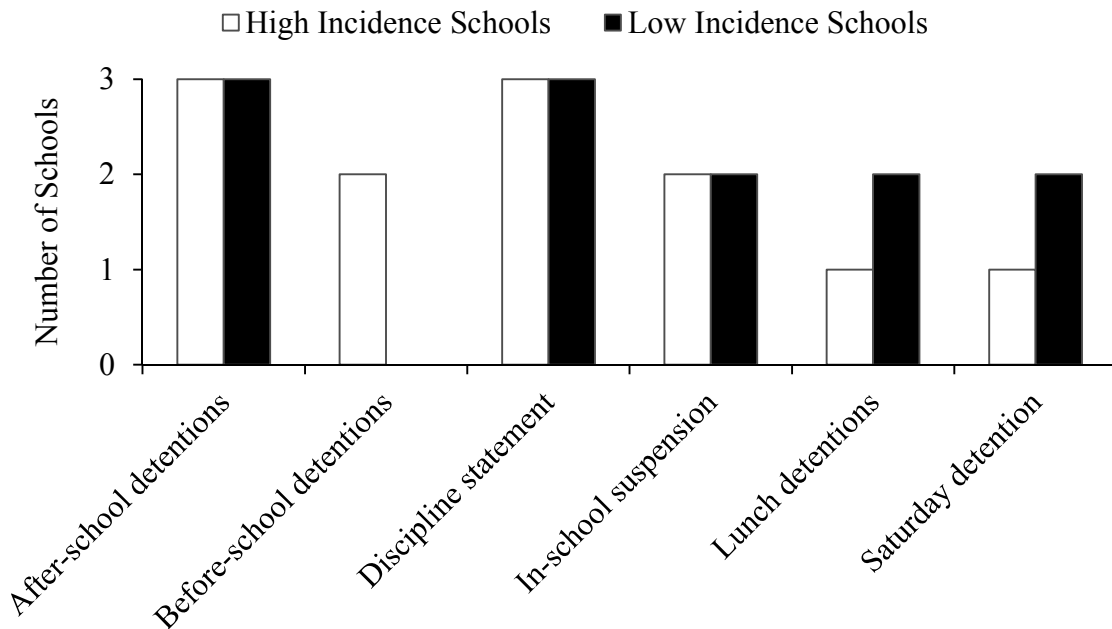
Figure 9. Disciplinary systems. As depicted within student handbooks, this figure represents school policies for developing and maintaining a climate of orderliness, respect, and responsibility.

In all schools, systems for carrying out consequences existed, whether those systems materialized on Saturdays or before, during, or after school. In discipline statements developed by individual schools, however, stated parameters for student behavior and its impact on the learning environment differed between settings. For example, H1 presented its philosophy with a commanding tone:

- "[D]iscipline must be an active concern of every staff member"; and

- "Lack of 100% concern will inevitably provide the atmosphere for turning minor problems into major concerns. . . ."

At the opposite end of the misconduct spectrum, L1 also was more authoritative, this time to students: "No student has the right to interfere. . . ."

Two low incidence schools, L2 and L3, had intricate policies for behavior but also

utilized more broad-based words such as "supportive measures," "mutual respect and productive interdependence," "self-control," and "self-discipline" to define their philosophical approaches. Likewise, H2 and H3 (both high incidence schools) displayed their philosophies with positive tones, using phrases like "fostering the educational development of individual students" and "teaching the desired student behaviors to all students."

Summary. Examining school/student handbooks from all six schools revealed that high incidence schools shared insights of their schools' organizational environments more inconsistently when compared to the displayed approaches of low incidence schools. Low incidence schools, especially L1 and L3, presented stark protocols and consequences for behavioral infractions of students. H1's approach conveyed an even stronger tone through command-like rules, but these protocols were embedded haphazardly throughout the handbook, and consequences were not attached to most rules.

While all three high incidence schools and one low incidence school (L3) presented mission statements, H2 was the only school to specifically address character traits as a driving focus of its mission. For the component of principal letters, which were found in two high incidence schools and one low incidence school, L2 provided the most personal approach. This school addressed its environment as a family, using the personal pronoun "our" to indicate school personnel's educational journey with students and their parents/guardians.

Although never demeaning, all schools except H2 approached their audiences with more formal tones throughout the handbooks. This was especially evident for areas dealing with expected behaviors. H2 was the only school to explain justification for rules

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in a manner that could be understood by an adult or a growing adolescent.

Exit Question

During interviews of both administrators/guidance counselors and teachers in the six schools, one final open-ended question was asked of all participants: "Tell me about the school climate in this building. How would you describe it?" The researcher transcribed participants' responses as emic data and used lean coding to gain focus of their responses in relationship to answering the study's central question and subquestions. First, responses of administrators and guidance counselors from high and low incidence schools are presented in Table 3. Then, responses of teachers from each grouping are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Exit Question for Administration and Guidance

Administrators and guidance counselors of high incident schools	Administrators and guidance of low incident schools
H1–The teachers and adults are definitely in charge. They expect kids to follow. We're pushing for change, but we're kind of stuck right now.	L1–If we walked by every door, teachers are teaching. Students are where they need to be. They are actively engaged. We don't have a lot of issues.
H1–There is a decisive split between those who are empathetic, compassionate, and want success for students and those who are showing up because this is their job.	L1–The kids are fantastic. The kids are generally good, good, good kids. They're respectful, and they generally try hard.
H2–We have been gifted with incredible leadership. This is a "yes kind of place"— yes, you can do it; yes, we can make it work; yes, let's figure it out kind of place. For our toughest students, this is a haven.	L2–It is close knit, more family-like. I see teachers here being parent figures for some kids. It's a fun environment.
H2–Out of all of our school buildings, [this school] used to be the unwanted stepchild of the district. Faculty and staff will give their right arm to come here now.	L2–It's very family-like. That's the good and the bad. People know each other very, very, very well.
H2–Our building has become an incubator for pride. [The school] has become its own living, breathing culture, and it's a great wonder to be a part of.	L3–We have a great climate, a great environment. Our teachers expect a lot of our kids. We hold the bar high. It's a great environment for learning.
H3 —	L3–It's a family-like atmosphere, a home away from home. Our most troubled students who push the envelope discipline-wise . . . I'm aware and make my staff aware that this is the best place they have because of their lives outside.
H3–It's awe-inspiring to see how much [faculty] support each other in this building. But we have our problems.	

Note. H1, H2, and H3 = responses of administrators and guidance counselors from three schools with high incidences of misconduct; L1, L2, and L3 = responses of administrators and guidance counselors from three schools with low incidences of misconduct; — indicates data were not obtained.

Response comparisons of administrative personnel. While administrators and

guidance counselors of two high incidence schools (H1 and H3) presented contrasting

elements within their views, H1 emerged as an outlier in comparison to both of them.

Through the eyes of administration, the climate at H1 was almost militant-like, with

adults "in charge . . . [and expecting] kids to follow." Empathy and compassion did not

permeate the entire school culture. For H3, one administrator saw this school's climate as being driven by a supportive faculty, yet openly recognized that problems were evident. On the other hand, administration and guidance of H2 sensed nothing but positive attributes of its school's climate. For this school, the focus was on leadership and philosophy of leading: "This is a 'yes kind of place.'" According to one respondent, this disposition had not always been part of the school's culture, and although once "the unwanted stepchild of the district," the school had become "an incubator for pride . . . its own living, breathing culture."

Administrators and guidance counselors of low incidence schools depicted similar attributes within their respective school climates. Administrative personnel of L1 admitted that their school had "generally good, good, good kids" who were actively engaged by staff. For L2 and L3, respondents created similar descriptions with terms such as "family-like," "parent figures," "closeness," and "high expectations." One administrator from L3 went as far as to term his school's climate as "a home away from home," often the best place for "troubled students who push the envelope discipline-wise."

Table 4

Exit Question for Teachers

Teachers of high incident schools	Teachers of low incident schools
H1–Basically, it is an extended family—a very safe climate, a homey climate. H1–It's changed. Our administration changes. I have worked for 12 superintendents and 14 principals. Stability is definitely not a factor. Faculty members are stability, but our administration is not. H2–It's quite positive. We're riding that wave as long as we can. We just got it all together. We're the place to be. H2–Definitely sunny. I love being here. I'm thankful every day that I get to come to work here. Every once in a while I think, "There's nowhere to go but down." We have such a good thing going. I would not want to leave this building unless I had to. H3–Lately, it is not good. A lot of it comes down to, obviously, testing and the pressure of that. That is the perfect storm aligning with our contract. It's a downward spiral right now. I'm hoping there's an upswing at some point. But it's so bad right now, and it's spreading like a wildfire. H3–Overall, administrators are behind doors, and when we see or hear them, it's because something new is happening and we have to do "one more thing." Teachers are tired, bent, and some are broken. Some are pulling mental health days—long weekends—because they can't handle it. Not that they're [administrators] terrible or slave drivers. I know I wouldn't want to be in their position. If we're not happy, how are kids supposed to be happy?	L1–Overall, I feel disorganization from the top down. There have been too many changes. Every time someone new comes in, there's [*sic*] new rules *he* has to follow. I'm not saying it's anyone's fault. It's just happenstance that all of this craziness has occurred. We need stability. A lot of people just take a hand's off. They sort of revert to "I'll just shut my door and do a great job." We do have very good teachers here who are concerned about kids. L1–It's unique. Everyone gets along well. Students are really good kids. I can't say enough. They follow expectations for the most part. L2–It's safe. It's productive. The overall concept of pride as far as like building and quality facilities . . . kids have negative outlooks . . . a tendency to be negative that our school's kind of broken down. L2–For some of them [students], there's such laissez-faire. If I do it, I do it. If I don't do it, I don't do it. Then when you contact home, it's the same type of attitude. Sometimes I feel like we're caught in a vicious cycle, but the kids are happy. L3–The climate here for kids is very welcoming. For some reason, parents feel uncomfortable when they walk through the doors. It's been like that for years. I think the positive school climate is increasing because we've made some changes. Overall? This is a very close faculty.

Note. H1, H2, and H3 = responses of teachers from three schools with high incidences of misconduct; L1, L2, and L3 = responses of teachers from three schools with low incidences of misconduct.

Response comparisons of teachers. For high incidence schools, teacher

portrayals of their individual environments fit into three categories: somewhat shaky,

entirely positive, and internally discouraged. Teachers of H1 viewed their climate as "an extended family" but also admitted that through natural transition occurring with the age of faculty, the climate was "just a different culture." Added to this transition was continued lack of stability with administrative positions (i.e., "12 superintendents and 14 principals"). Nothing but positive attributes and being "the place to be" comprised the climate of H2, according to its teachers. Fortunately, these teachers also were realistic, not solely euphoric. Phrasings such as "thankful every day that I get to come to work here" and "riding that wave as long as we can" suggested their true acknowledgements of this school's climate as being unique. Teachers of H3 openly admitted that they currently were victims of a "perfect storm" (with added accountability pressures and lack of a contract), and this definitely affected their school's climate. One respondent indicated teachers were pulling long weekends because of being "tired, bent, and . . . broken." The second respondent echoed a similar sentiment and added his concern for such negativity "spreading like wildfire."

For low incidence schools, teacher descriptions of their respective climates differed but often causes were external influences, which seemed to add minor degrees of pessimism. For instance, a teacher from L1 described its climate as one of harmony between members and as having "really good kids." Another concurred but added that disorganization was felt "from the top down" and stability was needed. Like a similar situation expressed by an H1 teacher, L1's lack of stability occurred outside the confines of its middle school building. At L2, one teacher saw the school climate as "safe" and "productive," yet broken-down facilities somewhat squelched "the overall concept of pride." A second teacher from this school thought kids were happy, even though the

climate "really hasn't changed much from when I was a student." This respondent also felt the school was "caught in a vicious cycle" with laissez-faire attitudes existing in many student homes. A similar struggle evidenced in the description of L3's climate. The teacher called the environment "for kids . . . very welcoming" because of "a very close faculty," yet this school, too, struggled with reaching its outside audience of parents/guardians.

Conclusion

The research design, which explored a selected group of schools representing extreme ends of the misconduct range over a three-year period, disclosed few very significant differences that simply can be accounted to contextual factors of climate. Perhaps because of the complex nature of both middle school environments and the populations in those environments, more significant factors may influence misconduct behaviors of students. Thus, in the concluding chapter, data are further considered within the more complex nature of such dynamic milieus. The study's ethnographic design, although focused on influences of school contextual factors influencing student behavior, allowed the researcher a first-person, objective exploration into even more complex factors influencing school climates and the cultures existing within them—with the most striking being, leadership.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive study was to increase understanding of relationships between school contextual factors and the fostering of student prosocial development and reduced at risk behaviors among adolescent populations in public middle school environments. All instruments of the study were informed by subscales represented by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (ASSC) School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI). In addition to the study's central question, findings also were based on the following subquestions regarding relationships between student behavior and attributes or conditions deriving from structural and social characteristics of middle school environments:

- What contextual factors emerge as common among middle school climates with low incidences of student misconduct?

- What contextual factors emerge as common among middle school climates with high incidences of student misconduct?

- What emerging themes, in relationship to behaviors of school personnel, show significant differences between the two classifications of schools?

Interpretation of the Findings

Data gathered through school site visits, collected documents, interviews of school personnel, and an on-line survey completed by each school faculty were examined to identify themes, patterns, similarities, and differences of the six explored school environments. Cross case analysis revealed shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language of middle school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers concerning

factors contributing to their respective school climates (Creswell, 2008). Contextual similarities and differences among schools were investigated through subscale dimensions of (a) faculty relations, (b) leadership and decision making, (c) discipline and management environment, and (d) attitude and culture.

Common contextual factors in low incidence schools. For the dimension of faculty relations, personnel of low incidence schools frequently attended school events, focused on "the kid-parent-community" connection, and highly collaborated within their schools. In terms of leadership and decision making, these same schools viewed school leadership as being highly political about allocation of resources and as often deflecting responsibility, yet personnel also suggested that leadership and decision making made significant differences in their climates. Respondents from all low incidence schools stressed that determining major decisions was achieved by collaborating, and they clearly knew the process for creating mission and vision.

For the area of discipline and management, low incidence schools did not involve students in rule-making processes, but the established protocols for their respective schools had moderate effects on their climates. To keep students controlled, the majority of personnel believed their schools had positive cultures with good kids, and to manage student behavior, these schools listed straightforward protocols with consequences for behavioral infractions within their student handbooks. In such written documents, students were approached with more formal tones, especially in the establishment of parameters for expected behaviors.

Attitude and culture of low incidence schools showed significant effects on their climates. Respondents identified their climates as being semi-intentional, with students

being listened to and represented. This intentional nature was further supported by outward practices that were in place regarding appearances of low incidence schools. All schools made efforts toward making visitors feel welcomed as well as promoting a positive first impression of their environments.

Common contextual factors in high incidence schools. Faculty relations for high incidence schools were semi-intentional, with environments supporting high percentages of collaboration. While respondents viewed leadership and decision making as occurring in an intentional environment, they also indicated that the leadership components of mission and vision were imparted upon them and not school-driven. For the dimension titled discipline and management environment, personnel described teacher-student interactions as being typically supportive and respectful, even though high incidence schools had strict rules with no flexibility. Reinforcing respondents' views of having positive cultures, high incidence schools also exhibited a tendency to readily display student work. Within student handbooks, though, all high incidence schools had inconsistent approaches to sharing information about their schools' organizational environments and consistently approached their audiences with more formal tones than those of their low incidence counterparts.

Significant differences between the two school classifications. A global view of the four types of data collected surfaced dissimilarities between schools with high incidences of misconduct and those with low incidences of misconduct. Through a paired-samples *t*-test of survey data, statistically significant mean differences were found for two dimensions: (a) leadership and decision making and (b) attitude and culture. These emerging variances between the study's two school groupings were particularly

evident after removing one school that appeared to be an anomaly from data analysis. Interview data showed similar distinctions in responses, especially from personnel of the school whose survey data materialized as an outlier.

Results of the study's observation instrument showed no substantial differences between physical characteristics of the school groupings, although outward protocols of all low incidence schools established first-impression cohesiveness while that of high incidence schools did not. Analysis of student handbooks for all schools revealed two noteworthy distinctions. High incidence schools shared insights of their schools' organizational environments more inconsistently when compared to the displayed approaches of low incidence schools. Once again, the same school that emerged as a noteworthy outlier for survey and interview results also differed from all other schools in its approach to communication with students and parents/guardians.

Discussion. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory suggests that the more encouraging and nurturing children's microsystems are the more positive developmental outcomes children will experience. In this study, the researcher speculated that middle school environments serve as robust microsystems for students. As results have shown, these settings also have doors of complexity that do not simply open or close by factors of place, time, physical features, activities, participants, and roles. Results further suggest that even schools with high and low incidences of student misconduct do not present distinctive dichotomies that may be fully credited to affecting student behavior. How is it, then, that schools may differ? What may contribute to such differences?

One possible answer may be in the nested dialectic Bronfenbrenner (1979)

suggests exists within and between the levels of his ecological systems. Typically, microsystems for students include family, school, peer groups, or religious settings—each its own distinctive environment. The educational environment, typically tagged as one noteworthy microsystem for students, also provides a context for other emerging, discrete microsystems: the specific school, its individual classrooms, and its professional family. Such a network—supportive of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) mesosystem views—suggests students may be affected by complexities within this one multifaceted environment. In other words, relationships among a school's microsystems establish precedents of interactions having indirect impact on students. It is this mesosystem, comprised of several bi-directional microsystems, whose relationships work together for the sake of students. It is at this junction where the dimensions of (a) leadership and decision making and (b) attitude and culture merge.

Limitation in Sampling

The study's population derived from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office of Safe Schools annual Safe Schools Reports, a compilation produced through a statewide longitudinal data collection system. The report repository permits Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to enter and access data regarding incidences of student-level infractions in Pennsylvania's public schools. The six rural public middle schools identified as participants in the study were selected based on consistency of misconduct infractions for eighth grade students over a three-year period. Hence, three schools with the greatest number of infractions and three with the fewest infractions per 100 eighth grade students represented both ends of the misconduct range and served as the study's sample.

While conducting on-site visits to collect observational and interview data, the researcher discovered that the fidelity by which Safe Schools Reports data were recorded and reported presented a reliability concern for the research design. At the time of the research gathering process, several schools had implemented, or were in the process of implementing, school-level computerized tracking systems. For these schools, data regarding misconduct infractions were recorded on a class-by-class basis. Personnel employed a real-time approach to track "misconducts" for individual students and had great flexibility within their learning teams and individual classrooms to set parameters for what student behavior constituted a tallying of misconduct. At other schools, personnel such as an assistant administrator handled full responsibility of recording and reporting data. This unforeseen difficulty of internal consistency for recording misconduct infractions may have limited the study's sampling procedure and constrained the generalizability of findings.

Additional Findings

The study's ethnographic design enabled the researcher to gather qualitative data in the natural settings of middle school environments. Beyond exploring the study's central research question and subquestions, the researcher also was able to collect rich descriptive data emerging through participants' narrative discourse in answering questions. Transcribed as emic data, these responses surfaced further insights into environments of the study's sample.

Trends of climate exit question. During interviews of school personnel, a final open-ended question was asked of all participants: "Tell me about the school climate in this building. How would you describe it?" When comparing this data with results of the

study's other instruments, several responses surfaced additional contextual findings that may have significantly contributed to influencing school climates within the study's sample. Personnel of several low incidence schools stressed having "really good kids" who were actively engaged in a "family-like" atmosphere within their schools. These respondents aligned their schools as being "a home away from home" for students. Additionally, participants from both one high and one low incidence school identified other external factors as impacting the contexts of their specific school environments. These factors included federal mandates, contract disputes, and instability of district leadership. One respondent coined this "downward spiral" as the "perfect storm" of "testing and the pressure of that" coupled with a lack of a contract for teachers. Another believed administrative instability within the school district attributed to teachers becoming passive and isolating themselves from the "craziness [that] has occurred."

One high incidence school as an anomaly. While conducting on-site interviews and observations to collect data, the researcher suspected one high incidence school of the sample gave indications of being a significant outlier. Survey results further supported the suspicion of such an anomaly. For each survey dimension, mean scores of this school were higher than any other school of the sample. In fact, the overall social climate rating of the school (4.06) was higher than the aggregate of all schools combined (3.45). Therefore, the researcher conducted a paired-samples *t*-test on dimensional data to measure statistically significant mean differences between the two school groupings.

Descriptive statistics inferred the outlier school may have had a statistically significant effect for the following dimensions: (a) leadership and decision making and (b) attitude and culture. Data gathered from the study's other instruments aligned with

this school's incongruous nature to all other schools of the sample. Moreover, this school merged the two distinctive dimensions of leadership and decision making and attitude and culture as one collective element throughout most data gathering.

For five of the six schools, leadership opportunities were available but were more self-directed and self-driven. In contrast, this school stressed that its leadership opportunities were organized, planned, and designed to build leaders naturally within the school climate. As such, the school was the only one to view its mission and vision through the lens of the school community and, unlike others, was the only one to have teachers who focused their mission statement responses in terms of their schools and students. While all schools attributed decision making with having assorted levels of collaboration, this school added another aspect to the process—"think tanks" as an administrative tool for the decision making process. Accordingly, teachers within this school also were the only ones to view their principal as being "highly respected."

Although "teachers' approaches to keeping students controlled" was a measurement for the dimension of discipline and management environment, this school separated itself from others, also adding attributes from the dimension of attitude and culture. For instance, teachers approached control by showing compassion to students and stimulating engagement in terms of their learning. Additionally, while no schools showed signs of vandalism or graffiti, this school intentionally used student "chalk graffiti" as a tool for promoting positive behavior and intentionally acknowledged all types of student-generated efforts with something as simple as a recognition note on a student locker. Finally, the school's student handbook merged with its culture. It was the lone school to address character traits as a driving focus of its mission and to explain

justification for rules in a manner that could be understood by an adult or adolescent.

During interviews, distinctions also emerged through participants' responses for the final exit question. Each person's focus was on leadership and philosophy of leading: "This is a 'yes kind of place.'" Furthermore, the school's culture was penned as "an incubator for pride," and additional phrasings such as "thankful every day that I get to come to work here" and "riding that wave as long as we can" suggested respondents' acknowledgements of this school's climate as being unique.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this ethnographic study was limited to the measured perceptions of personnel from six rural public middle schools. While a purposeful sample served the study's exploratory purpose, simple random sampling would increase the probability that any bias in the population is equally distributed (Creswell, 2008). Furthermore, widening the target population to include more schools of rural districts or even those of urban districts also would provide a more compelling representation of contextual factors perceived as reducing asocial and at risk behavior in students.

In order to provide the broadest range of essential features of a school, the Alliance for the Study of School Climate (2014d) suggests "incorporating a sample of ratings representing the broadest possible range of stakeholders" (para. 1). A replication of the current study that expands the participant population to include parents and students in both the survey and interview processes could reveal a more reliable representation of contextual factors of middle school environments.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study exploring effects of school-level leadership on middle school climates may reveal correlations between leadership attributes, the

resulting climates established, and possible effects of these climates on student behavior. Johnson (2009) found that by modifying context, schools "can reduce the likelihood of an individual being violent" (p. 464). Such a study would benefit individual schools or even school districts in discovering leadership attributes of their environments that may influence behavior in students.

Implications presented by the anomalous school. From 1973-2006, Brofenbrenner's ecological theory of human development underwent several changes and emerged as a bioecological theory referred to as the process–person–context–time (PPCT) model (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). PPCT emphasizes the person in development through proximal processes (i.e., interactions and interrelationships) between the person and the context (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, or chronosystem). Bronfenbrenner (1995) stipulated that "to be effective, proximal processes must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time" (p. 640).

Results of this study concerning the uncharacteristic nature emerging with H2 suggested this school's context (i.e., microsystem) also showed indications of being its own person. In fact, one administrator from the school summarized H2's environment in terms of human-like qualities: "Our building has become an incubator for pride. [The school] has become its own living, breathing culture, and it's a great wonder to be a part of." Bronfenbrenner's theories suggest that as the context is changing, so is the individual. Hence, further questions for consideration arising from this study include the following:

1. Who and/or what appears to be changing in environments similar to the one presented by H2?

2. What is the nature of the change taking place?

3. To what extent does this change appear to influence other contexts (i.e., systems)?

By expanding concepts of this study's current ethnographic design, a longitudinal study exploring possible dynamics between growth of the human (in this case, a school) and growth of the "system" itself may deepen understanding of the conceptualization, development, and subsequent influences of middle school cultures and their environments.

Conclusion

Reducing aggressive and disruptive student behavior remains a concern for educational researchers and practitioners. Today's 21st century generation faces an atmosphere of unprecedented challenges. Therefore, in public school settings, finding the best keys for addressing adolescents' asocial and at risk behaviors is critical. Despite the limitations of this study's findings for such a sizable challenge, school districts and individual schools could profit by further exploring contextual attributes of their systems, as well as the climates that such attributes create.

Brookmeyer et al. (2006) and Johnson (2009) indicated school climate serves as a protective factor for moderating students' negative behaviors. This researcher posited that school contextual factors, which help to establish these climates, may have a relationship to behaviors of middle school students. While the study's results indicated that contextual factors may not present distinctive patterns within schools of high and low incidences of student misconduct, Berkowitz and Bustamante (2013) added that "[t]he single most powerful influence on a child's development is how people, particularly people who are significant in the child's life, treat that child and treat others in the child's presence" (p.

11). Moreover, the work of Parker et al. (2010) and Berkowitz and Bustamante (2013) also shared the importance of having cohesive approaches in order to influence students. Often, such interventions and strategies are fostered in a school-wide environment of collegiality. This study's findings indicated that establishing effective middle school climates tailored to influencing behavioral needs of students is not achieved through "cookie cutter" approaches that can be used from system to system or school to school. Sustaining such effective conditions within school environments actually may be enhanced by on-going, dynamic partnerships between its stakeholders—students, teachers, and administrative leadership.

Within this study, the one school emerging as an outlier in data analysis also emerged as an organization of culture, having a shared collection of values and norms serving as the foundation for establishing its priorities. At the overt, professed, and covert levels, this school's culture exhibited the "residue of success" (Nolan, Goodstein, & Goodstein, 2008, p. 45). Values and culture were not competing subsets. In fact, the school exhibited a supportive culture. People were valued as human beings, and mutual support and trust were the primary bases for relationships. As one representative of public education institutions, this school's nurturing environment becomes the desired norm.

Greenberg et al. (2003) stressed that society and life experiences of children and youth have changed during the last century, including "increased economic and social pressure on families; weakening of community institutions that nurture children's social, emotional, and moral development; and easier access by children to media that encourage health-damaging behavior" (p. 467). Subsequently, school environments frequently become supplemental sources for meeting students' social-emotional needs and for

helping to promote their positive behavior. As Snowden and Boone (2007) suggested,

"[t]ruly adept leaders will know not only how to identify the context [they are] working

in at any given time but also how to change their behavior and their decisions to match

that context" (p. 75). The outcomes for the atypical school of this study were focused on

a future to be impacted by decisions and actions of the organization itself—an

organization with a permeating mission to make "kids first." The school as community

provided a powerful framework for this institution to look at its educational practices and

effectively meet needs of its students (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997).

The clarification of organizational values is a complex enigma that serves as a

means for both creating and sustaining organizational culture. Subsequently, the values of

this uncharacteristic school were its foundation, and these underlying principles were

seen and sensed in the physical attributes of the school as well as in the shared

interactions of its people. A set of five shared values best describes this organization:

- trust,

- collaboration,

- mutual respect,

- leadership, and

- excellence.

Trust includes being dedicated to promote integrity, professionalism, and

transparency in all actions and decisions. In this school, educators valued not only

teaching content but also modeling good character to students and others. Collaboration

means collectively partnering to maximize both expertise and experience. A culture of

professional collaboration was daily encouraged, made available, and acted upon in this

school. Mutual respect supports reciprocated dignity, regard, and esteem to others, which was visible in relationships among this school's personnel and their subsequent interactions. Because the school valued itself as a learning community that extended beyond the walls of the school building, education was nurtured as a demonstration of consistent character and actions. Leadership endorses influence over position through making sound decisions and inspiring others to perform well. Specifically for this school, leadership was promoted at all levels—staff, teachers, students, and even the extended community. Finally, excellence represents high standards of quality in work and behavior. The school desired to empower students for lifelong success, and this value encapsulated all others by emphasizing the state, quality, or condition for all aspects of its culture.

While the school environment simply can be envisioned as a place for imparting knowledge and intellectual training, such a setting also faces increasingly diverse and paramount tasks for supporting students' positive character development and helping them mature as respectful and responsible adults and citizens. As a learning community, the school context affords a powerful framework for looking at educational practice and effectively meeting needs of students (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997). Interestingly, as was felt in one school within the six of this study, such an environment and culture is palpable when it exists in a setting where the aligned arrows of focus for stakeholders follow closely those of its leader. Leadership, when practiced successfully throughout all dimensions, causes one to recognize the importance of the one particular person in a school who directs it, the principal.

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Appendix A – Administrator/Guidance Interview Instrument

Faculty Relations
- What percent of teachers in the building tend to commonly collaborate about pedagogy or curriculum delivery?
- How would you rate the overall competency of teachers in this building? Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent?
- What things might make this a better school for students?
- What are faculty meetings like here? Do most people attend? Why wouldn't a person have to?
- What kinds of leadership opportunities are there for teachers in this school?

Leadership/Decisions
- What has been the procedure for creating mission and vision?
- How are major decisions determined in this school?
- How much do faculty members influence the decisions you make?
- Can you tell me the two guiding values you and your faculty believe in?
- When does shared decision making occur in this school and when doesn't it?
- If you wanted new faculty room furniture, can you tell me Plan B if you were unsuccessful getting the district to put money in your school budget?
- How often do you talk with students about this school and their experience here?

Discipline Environment
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how consistently is the discipline policy followed in this school?
- Is there consistency in classrooms about behavior expectations?
- Do teachers generally see discipline as punishment or as a way to change behavior?
- Do teachers work hard to keep students controlled? Do they use strict classroom rules to do so?
- How would you describe teacher-student interactions? Would you typically describe interactions as supportive and respectful between both parties or as fair but teacher-dominated?
- When disciplining students, are most teachers generally reactive to problematic behavior? Do they frequently show anger and frustration in such situations?

Attitude and Culture
- At this school, do teachers generally believe all students can do well?

Exit Question
- Tell me about the school climate in this building. How would you describe it?

Appendix B – Teacher Interview Instrument

Faculty Relations
- What percent of teachers in the building tend to commonly collaborate about pedagogy or curriculum delivery?
- How would you rate the overall competency of administration in this building? Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent
- What things might make this a better school for students?
- What kinds of leadership opportunities are there for teachers in this school?

Leadership/Decisions
- Can you repeat the mission of this school?
- What has been the procedure for creating mission and vision?
- How are major decisions determined in this school?
- Can you tell me two guiding values your faculty believes in?
- When does shared decision making occur in this school and when doesn't it?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being *highly respected*, how respected is the principal by staff?
- How often do you talk with students about this school and their experience here?

Discipline Environment
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how consistently is the discipline policy followed in this school?
- Is there consistency across classrooms concerning behavior expectations?
- Do most teachers seem genuinely able to have students involved with establishing classroom rules?
- Do most teachers work hard to keep students controlled? Do they use strict classroom rules to do so?

Attitude and Culture
- Do students feel a part of the school community and refer to the school as "their school"?
- Do students self-correct peers who use verbal abuse on others?
- Do most students feel like the adults in this school will listen to them?
- Do students generally seek out adults in this school for advice?

Exit Question
- Tell me about the school climate in this building. How would you describe it?

Appendix C – Observation Instrument

Physical Appearance
- Signage for visitors to direct them to comfortable seating and waiting area
- Outside of school well-manicured and landscaped attractively (e.g., flowers, shrubs, trees, grass to the edges of sidewalks)
- Students and/or staff seen picking up litter in halls
- Current student work displayed
- Are there conditions relative to brokenness (e.g., water fountains, bathroom fixtures, lockers, ceiling tiles)?
- Are there signs of graffiti or vandalism present?

Faculty Relations
- Are there signs that faculty members approach problems as a team/collective?
- Are team meetings led by teachers?
- Teachers are seen or heard talking about coordinated teaching activities.

Discipline Environment
- Classroom climate seems congenial and students are respected by teachers.

Appendix D – Summary Report

Faculty Relations	Overall	H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
Faculty teaming	3.76	3.18	4.43	3.82	3.00	3.44	4.00
Faculty problem-mediating	3.61	3.00	4.22	3.64	2.89	3.31	4.00
Faculty planning efficiency	3.58	2.82	4.17	3.45	3.22	3.50	3.67
Faculty criticism	3.37	2.64	3.91	3.45	2.89	3.19	3.67
Faculty status quo	3.29	2.45	3.83	3.82	2.33	3.25	3.33
Faculty respect for each other	3.91	2.82	4.50	4.36	3.67	3.56	4.11
Faculty meetings	3.24	2.55	3.78	3.45	3.33	2.63	3.44
Faculty attendance at school events	3.00	1.55	3.62	2.64	3.11	3.06	3.56
Faculty leadership	3.75	2.73	4.26	4.27	3.56	3.44	3.78
Faculty socialism	3.54	3.27	4.09	3.64	3.11	3.00	3.78
Dimension Scores	3.51	2.70	4.08	3.65	3.11	3.24	3.73

Leadership and Decision Making	Overall	H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
Clear mission	3.19	1.82	4.17	3.27	2.89	2.75	3.33
Presence of vision	3.14	2.09	4.04	3.09	2.88	2.63	3.33
Decisions based on mission	3.35	2.00	4.13	3.73	3.00	3.06	3.44
Faculty's sense of personal value	3.12	2.27	4.30	2.45	3.00	2.19	3.75
Shared values	3.49	2.27	3.95	3.73	3.13	3.67	3.67
Shared decision making	3.08	2.36	4.00	2.91	3.22	2.31	3.00
Faculty's trust in leadership	3.25	2.18	4.26	3.09	3.33	2.50	3.44
Roles of leadership	3.09	2.45	3.83	3.18	2.78	2.44	3.33
View about school's leadership	3.41	2.45	4.48	3.45	3.25	2.56	3.44
Priority of climate to leadership	3.49	2.73	4.30	3.09	3.22	3.19	3.67
Dimension Scores	3.26	2.26	4.15	3.19	3.07	2.73	3.44

Discipline and Management	Overall	H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
Adherence to discipline policy	3.17	1.91	3.82	3.27	3.33	2.81	3.44
Clarity of discipline policy	3.33	2.09	4.00	3.27	3.67	3.00	3.44
Effective discipline	3.85	3.09	4.22	4.09	3.67	3.56	4.22
Classroom climate	3.78	3.00	4.17	3.91	4.00	3.63	3.67
Student-generated ideas for rules	3.04	2.18	3.65	3.09	2.78	3.19	2.44
Purpose of discipline	3.82	2.91	4.17	3.91	3.67	3.81	4.11
Teacher-student interactions	3.88	3.18	4.48	4.40	3.56	3.63	3.44
Teacher reactions to student behavior	3.96	3.18	4.52	3.80	3.78	3.88	4.00
Promotion of student self-direction	3.53	2.55	4.09	4.00	3.67	3.38	3.00
Promotion of community in class	3.64	2.64	4.17	3.78	3.56	3.44	3.78
Dimension Scores	3.60	2.67	4.13	3.75	3.57	3.43	3.56

Attitude and Culture	Overall	H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
Feel part of a community	3.70	2.73	4.04	3.67	3.78	3.63	4.11
Avoid abusive language	3.25	2.45	3.57	3.11	3.44	3.25	3.33
Work toward collective goals	3.26	2.64	3.65	3.00	3.44	3.31	3.00
Feel sense of school pride	3.28	2.36	3.76	3.56	3.44	3.00	3.33
Have a voice	3.31	2.40	3.83	3.33	3.00	3.44	3.00
Feel part of something large	3.48	2.73	4.09	3.56	3.22	3.19	3.56
High goals for students	3.86	2.91	4.35	4.11	3.67	3.81	3.78
Feel sense of gratitude toward school	3.23	2.64	3.48	3.67	3.44	3.00	3.11
Student comfort with adult	3.62	3.00	4.17	3.67	3.33	3.56	3.33
Maintain traditions and school pride	3.42	2.60	4.13	3.33	3.11	3.31	3.11
Dimension Scores	3.44	2.65	3.91	3.50	3.39	3.35	3.37

All Dimensions	Overall	H1	H2	H3	L1	L2	L3
Faculty Relations	3.51	2.70	4.08	3.65	3.11	3.24	3.73
Leadership and Decision Making	3.26	2.26	4.15	3.19	3.07	2.73	3.44
Management and Discipline	3.60	2.67	4.13	3.75	3.57	3.43	3.56
Attitude and Culture	3.44	2.65	3.91	3.50	3.39	3.35	3.37
Overall Social Climate Rating	3.45	2.57	4.06	3.52	3.28	3.19	3.52

Appendix E – System Climate Levels

System	Level 3 Intentional	Level 2 Semi-intentional	Level 1 Accidental
Ethos	Sound vision translated into effective practice	Good intentions translated into practices that "work"	Practices defined by the relative self-interest of faculty and staff
Effect on students	Experience changes students for the better	Experience has a mixed effect on students	Experience has a net negative effect on students
Staff relations	Collaborative	Collegial	Competitive
General characterization	Encouraging and empowering	Opportunities for those who seek them out	Discouraging and limiting
Teachers' orientation toward students and learning	Operate as lead learners in which the learning community encourages a reciprocal validating learning relationship between teacher and student	Operate as teachers in which the school encourages a hierarchal supportive learning relationship of teacher to student	Operate as employees of an institution in which there exists a very limited hostile relationship of teacher over student
Students' view of classroom dynamic	Empowered to see themselves as the most significant element of the learning environment responsible for collective success	Willing to see the teacher as the most significant element of the learning environment worthy of student respect and support	Unable to see any person as a significant element in the classroom. All participants are expendable.
Process for school improvement	Internally derived by all stakeholders through praxis, best practices	Externally derived by school leadership by acquiring existing models	Externally implemented by outside groups and implicitly or explicitly opposed by the stakeholders
Evaluation of performance	School identifies and creates benchmarks for success aligned to the mission and vision of school and creates assessments to measure attainment.	School adheres to the defined benchmarks of external forces and aligns assessments to measure attainment.	School sees evaluation as a punitive approach to motivate non-compliant participants.

Note. From "Characterization of Each of the 3 School Climate Levels as Measured in the ASSC SCAI," by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2014 (http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/#3-levels). Copyright 2014 by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, Charter College of Education, CSULA. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix F – Interview Results for Faculty Relations

Questions	Administration and guidance of high incident schools	Administration and guidance of low incident schools	Teachers of high incident schools	Teachers of low incident schools
Q1. What percent of teachers in the building tend to commonly collaborate about pedagogy or curriculum delivery?	H1–Less than 50% H1–Maybe 20%; "common planning time" H2–100%; grade and core area teams with "time to collaborate every day" H2–Hopefully 100%; grade- level teams and content-specific teams H2–95% or better; "distributed leadership and putting power in teacher's hands" H3–About 80%; emphasize teams H3–100%	L1–100% L1–90-95%; team and common planning time L2–at least 75%; "been a big push recently" L2–90%+; occurring formally and informally L3–100%; common planning times L3–100%	H1–Share information whenever there is a chance; "like a small family" H1–50% H2–99.9%; "built into schedule" H2–100%; "Here for the kids . . . need to be talking to each other" H3–Pretty much 100% by grades H3–80-85%; "team setting"	L1–17%; "three or four on a daily basis and sporadically for departments" L1–75% L2–80-90%; "happens usually during faculty meetings" L2–100%; "not cross-curricular all the time but definitely within each department" L3–75-80%; "constantly collaborating"
Q2. How would you rate the overall competency of teachers in the building? Poor, fair, good, excellent	H1–Fair H1–Probably good? H2–Between good and excellent; "top-notch teachers who love what they do and really care about students" H2–Fantastic; "put them up against any other middle school" H2–Very good to excellent; "certain areas that we as a building need to grow in" H3–Excellent, without question H3–Between good and excellent	L1–Excellent L1–Good to excellent; "half of my staff being excellent and half being good" L2–Good L2–Somewhere between good to excellent L3–Excellent; "stick my teachers up against anybody" L3–Excellent		

Q3. How would you rate the overall competency of administration in the building? Poor, fair, good, excellent			H1–Excellent H1–Good H2–Excellent; "so lucky" H2–Excellent; "listens to us, talks to us, makes time for us, is on our side" H3–Good H3–Fair to good	L1–Fair L1–Between fair and good L2–Somewhere between fair and good L2–Good L3–Excellent; "trusts us . . . doesn't micromanage"
Q4. What things might make this a better school for students?	H1–Improvement of the disconnect between teachers H1–Block scheduling; more cross-curricular efforts H2–Better home environments for some students H2–More opportunities in the "down times"; "keep them focused . . . fewer discipline issues" H2–Connections to community and families; "finding that *magic* that connects to the community and families" H3–More preventative efforts to "stop problems from happening before they occur" H3–Working on climate; "looking at how we treat our people"	L1–Consistency of leadership; although middle school stable, "quite a bit of turnover has negatively affected district" L1–A sense of pride among students; old facilities L2–Teaching more than academics; addressing "social aspects with kids" L2–Letting go of control and letting kids be more active; "teaching methods need to come into 21st century" L3–More funding and options for students; "staff stretched pretty thin" L3–More parental and community involvement	H1–Chances to spend more time with other teachers, sharing experiences of "what is going on and what is not working" H1–Funding H2–Technology for each student; more supportive home environments H2–Additional supports for struggling students H3–More collaboration between administration and teachers H3–A more positive faculty	L1–Clear guidelines; "handbook not always clearly followed" L1–Improved instructional delivery, especially with Common Core L2–More community outreach and collaboration with other school districts L2–Consistency L3–A climate back that is embedded with kids outside of instruction; more parent support
Q5. What are faculty meetings like here? Do most people attend? Why wouldn't a person have to attend?	H1–Mandatory in the mornings H1–Mandatory; either purely informational or engaging to meet a need of faculty H2–Mandatory; "great . . . short and to the point"	L1–Contractual; most attend L1–Required to attend; if unable, still "accountable for that time" in different ways L2– Assumed but not contractual; everyone attends		

	H2–Mandatory; "generally upbeat and positive" H2–Contractual; faculty-driven H3–Contractual H3–Most attend	L2–Assumed but not contractual; majority attend L3–Required; majority attend L3–Mandated; five or six a year		
Q6. What kinds of leadership opportunities are there for teachers in this school?	H1–Nothing pre-existing but open to a lot of things H1–Fostering of ideas and free "reign to run with it" H2–A committee system to cover behavior, academics, clubs school spirit, or organizations; some appointed leadership positions and others, open for volunteers H2–A lot of different committees and opportunities if a teacher wants to do something H2–Built into PLCs: ongoing, cyclical, and "embedded throughout what we do here" to build capacity H3–Advisors for different clubs and organizations H3–No formal structure–authentic and organic kinds of leadership	L1–Used to more; some turnover and inconsistencies L1–Several committees L2–Good many but have to be intrinsically motivated: "bringing them to the table" L2–Anything from curriculum to data to things on your own; not a lot "that are advertised" but "come to the surface throughout the year" L3–"Always opportunities to take the role, take the lead" L3–All kinds of committees; "everybody on board for everything" because of small size	H1–Coaching, club activities, or teacher-driven initiatives H1–Not many; maybe an extracurricular activity H2–The union, department meetings, and several different teacher-led committees H2–All different types of committees and clubs H3–Very open administration; "if there's an idea" H3–The union	L1–About six years ago, stopped sending people to workshops and other opportunities; held on to just certain people; not as much buy-in L1–Been through quite a few administrations; things have changed–not many opportunities L2–A lot of opportunities and "wearing many hats" L2–Curriculum committees, data teams, student council; "basically whatever you want to do" L3–Allowed to be own individual; can take an idea and "go with it"

Note. H1, H2, and H3 = responses of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers from three schools with high incidences of misconduct; L1, L2, and L3 = responses of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers from three schools with low incidences of misconduct; — indicates data were not obtained.

Questions	Administration and guidance of high incident schools	Administration and guidance of low incident schools	Teachers of high incident schools	Teachers of low incident schools
Q1. What has been the procedure for creating mission and vision?	H1–Not sure H1–Talking to teachers and having meetings about expectations for kids, community, and self; creating a comprehensive plan H2–Not sure; "haven't been part of that" H2–District-wide meetings with representatives from each school H2–Based on very specific needs of middle school building; now is "more of a guide than a sage" H3 — H3–Developing the idea, such as committing to making 90% of students proficient, regardless of socioeconomic status or ability	L1–Committee formed; had to do with strategic plan L1–Revisited every three years by another team – community, teachers, and administration L2–Goes through principal and then to superintendent L2–Part of comprehensive plan; combination of committees (administration, community, and teachers) L3–Something to do with the superintendent's vision; a lot of collaboration among buildings L3–District operates under same mission and vision; take those goals and try to adhere and fulfill them	H1–Through an entire K-12 group H1–Through an entire K-12 group H2–Previous superintendent dictated from on high; current superintendent formed a committee H2–Does not really know; kind of evolved with principal H3–Through "a very strong feeling we all have" H3– Does not know; "a bunch of grayed board members?"	L1–Depending on administrator, sometimes by committee and sometimes not L1–"Believe there was a committee" L2–"Reaching out to the faculty, usually developing a committee" L2–Committee L3–Forming a committee of stakeholders, faculty, and administration
Q2. Can you repeat the mission of this school?			H1–"Really can't" H1–No H2–No, but abbreviated version: "Every child succeeding in every way" H2–No, but "mission is students—whatever it takes to give them what they need" H3–Absolutely not H3–"A resounding hell no"	L1–No; "posted on wall in my room" L1–Nope; "might have a poster" L2–Laughs; "to ensure kids have a safe learning environment and are productive" L2–No; "knows where it's at" L3–On board minutes; "something about establishing goals, focusing on what best for students"

Q3. How are major decisions determined in this school?	H1–Administrative meeting (principal, superintendent guidance) H1–Principal runs the building unless something is contrary to what community values; takes input to get perspectives H2–Collaboration with principal at team or building levels H2–Decision by committee H2–By using "think tanks"— "what does and does not work and if you had your wish…" H3 — H3–Depends on what it is; "some, collaboration and others, *me* decisions"	L1–Superintendent and school board L1–The principal L2–Chain of command – principal, board meeting, superintendent L2–Between principal and teachers L3–Team decision of district L3–Collaboration	H1–Through collaboration and open table/ discussion at faculty meetings H1–By the superintendent and school board H2–Like a 70/30 – administration and faculty H2–By principal with collaboration from faculty H3–By teachers if not affecting rest of school; otherwise, ideas need just run by administrator H3–Collaboration of administrators	L1–No main structure; asks what people think L1–School board; "school directors have a lot of power" L2–School board administration, and faculty L2–Through conversations at faculty meetings L3–Group decision by superintendent and administrative team
Q4. How much do faculty members influence the decisions you (i.e., administrator) make?	H1–A very strong influence H1–Depends on decision; predicts "naysayers, supporters, and wheels that need greased" H2–A lot; "every effort made to take in opinions of teachers" H2–Wants faculty perspective; "What do you think?" H2–Absolutely 100%; "their building, our building, shared approach" H3 — H3–Open to suggestions, "especially if solutions to problems"	L1–Collaborative process; faculty opinions taken into consideration L1–Promotes teacher buy-in and input but makes final decision L2–Definitely collaborative; faculty feedback matters L2–Varies; door always open for conversation L3–Open-door policy; handles issues personally or through administrative team L3–Collaborative bridge-builder; talks to major stakeholders (e.g., faculty or parents)		

Q5. Can you tell me two guiding values you and your faculty believe in?	H1–Good academic strengths; good character H1–Kids will be as successful as you let them; discipline is another learning tool H2–Transparency; student first H2–Every kid gets an opportunity; there's good to be found in every kid H2–Kids first; pride H3 — H3–Authenticity; best interests	L1–Every student can learn in some way L1–Put kids' needs first; speak to everyone as a person L2–Respect; meeting hierarchy of needs L2–Kids come first; education is important L3–Responsibility; accountability L3–What's best for children; responsibility	H1–We're here for them; to encourage them H1–All students can learn; we understand where our students come from and the types of lives they have H2–Kids come first; being a supportive community H2–Whatever it takes; it's not about us but about the kids H3–Strive for excellence in any way we can; we are stronger working together H3–Does not know but knows "we, as a team, are completely student-driven"	L1–Believe in each child as an individual; curriculum is valued L1–Respect; accountability L2–Student-focused/student-centered; caring for students' personal and emotional needs L2–Any kid can do something; we're all in it together L3–What's best for kids; passion
Q6. When does shared decision making occur in this school and when doesn't it?	H1–Not happening right now H1–When something is school-wide from the standpoint of teaching and curriculum H2–With major decisions; collaborative effort to make those decisions H2–99.9% of decisions by committee H2–Collaborative; executive decisions made when in best interests of kids, regardless of input H3 — H3–Takes input for something impacting entire faculty or student body	L1– No discussion if school board or superintendent wants something L1–Occurs when planning major projects or when something has long-term effects L2–Happens for certain topics; things like discipline (in the handbook), not shared L2–Beginning and end of year, at faculty meetings, and during three review days L3–Likes being informed of all possibilities before making decisions L3–Occurs majority of the time	H1–All the time at faculty meetings and team meetings H1–On a very limited basis H2–Essentially on day-to-day details at the team level H2–During faculty meetings H3–Daily at team levels; hit and miss with administration H3–Sometimes on a professional development day	L1–Occurs on nonessentials L1–Occurs with common, everyday problems L2–Usually at faculty meetings, but not enough L2–At times ideas will be "floated out" at faculty meetings or through emails L3–Seeks input when it has to do with individuals, a group, or a team

Q7. If you wanted new faculty room furniture, can you tell me Plan B if you were unsuccessful getting the district to put money in your school budget?	H1–Split costs between peers H1–Everybody pitches in; a faculty member gets it; student council helps H2–Work together as a team to get it H2–Make do with what they have or fundraise to get it H2–Budget it; building-level decision; lay-away plan H3 — H3–Tap into extra pools of money, community/ corporation donations, or food store rewards	L1–Union, especially personal types of things L1–$5 Friday jeans fund (but only for needs of a particular school family); otherwise, pay themselves L2–Out of own pocket L2–Buy it themselves; people chip in L3–Grant writing and other avenues L3–If it were Plan B, it wouldn't be a priority; PTOs and community service organizations		
Q8. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being *highly respected*, how respected is the principal by staff?			H1–8 H1–6 H2–10 H2–10 H3–5 H3–5	L1–Probably a 6 L1–5 L2–7 L2–Probably an 8 L3–Between an 8 and 9
Q9. How often do you talk with students about this school and their experience here?	H1–Daily H1–"Outside of discipline realm, not very often" H2–Daily H2–"All the time" H2–Daily; makes it a habit H3 — H3–Daily; takes part in lunch duty	L1–All the time L1–Every day L2–Probably every day; "don't see how not" L2–A lot; "maybe to the teachers' chagrin" L3–Daily; "rarely miss a middle school lunch period" L3–Daily	H1–"Once a week" H1–"Pretty much a good bit" H2–Once in a while; "teachable moment" H2–Daily H3–Daily H3–Never, just classroom experience	L1–At least weekly L1–Daily L2–Frequently L2–Weekly L3–Often (15-20 minutes per week)

Note. H1, H2, and H3 = responses of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers from three schools with high incidences of misconduct; L1, L2, and L3 = responses of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers from three schools with low incidences of misconduct; — indicates data were not obtained.

Appendix H – Interview Results for Discipline and Management Environment

Questions	Administration and guidance of high incident schools	Administration and guidance of low incident schools	Teachers of high incident schools	Teachers of low incident schools
Q1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how consistently is a discipline policy followed in this school?	H1–About 6 or 7 H1–Probably 9 H2–Consistently by teams H2–9 H2–9, with freedom to break away from it H3 — H3–Very consistently	L1–Between an 8 and a 9 L1–Every day L2–6 L2–Followed but has tiered levels L3–A 9; "can't pigeonhole everything that comes up" L3–A 10 building-wide, using district expectations	H1–9 H1–6 H2–8.5; much better than before H2–7 or 8; "try to work together to make it as consistent as possible" H3–A 7; "small things that occur are hit or miss" H3–3 or 4	L1–"50% handbook; 50% administrator's call" L1–4 L2–Somewhere between 7 and 8 L2–Fairly well L3–8; "cannot treat each kid equally but have to treat fairly"
Q2. Is there consistency among classrooms about behavior expectations?	H1–No H1–No, no, no; part of the problem H2–Yes, based upon the pods H2–Most of the time (75%) H2–Yes, as close to a consistent approach as possible with some uniqueness H3 — H3–Yes; each team has own approach and works closely to make sure that's the case	L1–Yes; teams establish own rules L1–Yes, yes L2–Yes, as far as expectations; some "may be better handling expectations" L2–Basics of respect and politeness, yes; some leniency within rooms L3–Individual expectations differ but general rules still there L3–Yes; teachers deal differently with incidents	H1–80% of the time H1–"Have a lot of the same" but expectations differ H2–Have general rules and "all *generally* on the same page," with individual styles H2–Yes, within grade levels H3–Yes, because of "team teaching and discussion" H3–Yes, within teams; differences with individual expectations	L1–No L1–Yes, within grades L2–Mostly L2–Yes; "just different procedures or ways of doing things" L3–Yes, within teams or departments; individual expectations differ based on personality
Q3. Do teachers seem genuinely able to have students involved with establishing classroom rules?			H1–Yes H1–Most do rules themselves H2–Happens on the teams H2–Happens more with younger teachers H3–Not really H3–No, no	L1–Most follow handbook and "come up with own set of rules" L1–Higher grades, kids are involved; lower grades, teachers set rules L2–Teachers establish a set L2–No; "3Rs are set expectations" L3–Go by handbook but also add own ideas

Q4. Do teachers generally see discipline as punishment or as a way to change behavior?	H1–Punishment H1–80% as punishment H2–Punishment, expecting changed behavior H2–Shifting toward a way to change behavior H2–Not punishment for a crime; teachable moment for most H3—— H3–Depends on the teacher; "a lot of times people just want their pound of flesh"	L1–Punishment probably; only written up after many chances L1–Change behavior, using a "reward" and "strike" system L2–Punishment, using repetitive consequences to get students to "change their lack of responsibility" L2–*They* see it as a way to change behavior L3–Change behavior; "not ogres, but hold kids accountable" L3–Both; "some people see as punishment; others, to change behavior"		L1–No; guide students to do what is best L1–No; have good kids L2–Yes; use strict rules L2–No; have good kids L3–No; have very comfortable environment
Q5. Do teachers work hard to keep students controlled? Do they use strict classroom rules to do so?	H1–Have strict rules but quick to "push the student off on someone else" H1–Is very little bend; flexibility lacking H2–99% work hard to keep control; use compassion, not strict rules H2–Some do; gain control by making kids interested H2–Goes to engagement; emphasizing student-centered learning H3 — H3–No; no authoritarian teachers anymore	L1–Yes; only "written up" after a number of opportunities and chances L1–No; nice school, culture, and routines established L2–Yes; majority use stricter rules L2–No; use "pretty generic and basic" rules L3–No; have well-mannered students who know what the rules are L3–Work hard to keep discipline issues at bay; not all are strict; diverse teaching styles and personalities	H1–More class specific and collaborative; "make up a rule that is going to fit for that classroom" H1–Yes; use strict rules H2–Yes, with the administrator as base; "kids respect his authority" H2–Yes, by promoting interaction; no "enforcing rules like a dictator" H3–Control "just happens because of environment; kids used to way it is" H3–Way too hard; spend more time "cleaning up messes and putting out fires than anticipating those fires and messes"	

Q6. How would you describe teacher-student interactions? Would you typically describe interactions as supportive and respectful between both parties or as fair but teacher-dominated?	H1–Fair but teacher-dominated H1–Fair but teacher-dominated H2–Friendly; students not intimidated by teachers H2–Varies; one that "get it buy into relationships with kids" H2–No doubt; a respectful interaction H3 — H3–Teacher-dominated; teacher-led	L1–Pretty balanced; respectful and interactive L1–Both; at times more teacher-dominated but still fair as much as possible L2–A mix; more teacher-dominated but supportive L2–Good intentions by very vested teachers but old school "I'm large and in charge" L3–Very supportive and respectful L3–50-50 relationship; kids respect teachers and vice versa
Q7. When disciplining students, are most teachers generally reactive to problematic behavior? Do they frequently show anger and frustration in such situations?	H1–Yes, yes H1–Yes, yes, yep H2–No; no H2–Majority are proactive; some react to everything H2–Happens, but preventative maintenance limits discipline problems H3 — H3–95% are laid back, relaxed	L1–More patient; have seen a teacher really, really angry only "a handful of times" L1–Mostly not; tolerant teachers but as school year progresses expect improved behavior L2–Reactive and show anger and frustration L2–No, but "wouldn't be surprised to see it" L3–Happens with voice inflections or facial expressions; apologize when wrong L3–No

Appendix I – Interview Results for Attitude and Culture

Questions	Administration and guidance of high incident schools	Administration and guidance of low incident schools	Teachers of low incident schools	Teachers of high incident schools
Q1. At this school, do teachers generally believe all students can do well?	H1–No H1–No H2–Yes, fantastic faculty H2–Would say so H2–Absolutely, absolutely H3 — H3–Absolutely	L1–Yes, think that they do L1–Yes, that all students can grow L2–Yes L2–Yes, yes L3–Yes, I really believe that L3–Yes, 90%		
Q2. Do students feel part of the school community and refer to the school as "their school"?			L1–Yes, very comfortable here L1–Absolutely L2–Yes; one school–one family L2–Unsure; "definitely school spirit in some ways" L3–"Over the last year or two, no"	H1–Yes, they do H1–Yes; school is focal point of community H2–Yes H2–Oh, yeah H3–Definitely think so H3–Definitely
Q3. Do students self-correct peers who use verbal abuse on others?			L1–Has seen it happen but also "tempering themselves and not saying anything" L1–Yes L2–Happens in "pockets here and there" L2–Rarely L3–Depends on the individual and situation	H1–Yes, like an extended family here H1–On a limited basis H2–Not as much as they should H2–"A lot more with the eighth graders because they're being taught" H3–Not always but at times H3–"*More* apt to tell a teacher than step in"
Q4. Do most students feel like the adults in this school will listen to them?			L1–Yes, at least maybe two adults L1–Yes, some adults L2–Yes, most of the time L2–Yes L3–Not all adults, but some "are basically like a mother and father	H1–Yes H1–I believe so H2–For the most part H2–Definitely think they do H3–Probably a majority H3–I think so

| Q5. Do students generally seek out adults in this school for advice? | | L1–Yes, sometimes too much
L1–Yes, but depends on the teacher
L2–"Not generally, no"
L2–"Oh, yeah"
L3–Yes, certain individuals | H1–Oh, yes
H1–No
H2–Not really; maybe more in the teams
H2–Definitely think so
H3–"Think students *know* they can come see us"
H3–"Know they do from me" and a few others |

Note. H1, H2, and H3 = responses of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers from three schools with high incidences of misconduct; L1, L2, and L3 = responses of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers from three schools with low incidences of misconduct; — indicates data were not obtained.

Appendix J – Permission Letter

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

CHARTER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Division of Curriculum and Instruction • Elementary and Secondary Education

Dear Sir or Madam:

Ms. Lori Y. Brown, a doctoral candidate in education at Frostburg State University in Frostburg, Maryland, has been granted permission by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, a division of the Charter College of Education at California State University Los Angeles, to use the School Climate Quality Analytic Assessment Instrument and School-based Evaluation/Leadership Team Assessment Protocol (including sub-scales) to fulfill program requirements at the university. My signing of this letter confirms that the Alliance for the Study of School Climate, Charter College of Education, CSULA, owns the copyright to the above-described material.

Permission is granted only for the purposes of Ms. Brown's research project and said permission ends with the completion of her project. The requested permission extends to the prospective publication of her dissertation by ProQuest Information and Learning (ProQuest) through its UMI® Dissertation Publishing business. I recognize ProQuest will make her dissertation available for free internet download. I also realize her manuscript will be submitted to Frostburg State University and will be available in its library.

Sincerely,

John V. Shindler, Ph. D.

Co-director of the Alliance for the Study of School Climate

Developer of the ASSC Climate Assessment Instrument

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