The Relationship between Teacher Empowerment and School Performance in Selected South Georgia and Florida Elementary Schools

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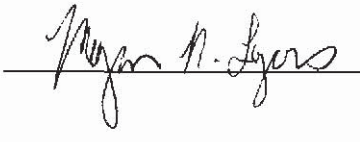
Signature 

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ABSTRACT

Definitions of teacher empowerment include autonomy, choice, responsibility, participation, and decision making. In the educational arena, empowerment can promote teacher leadership, improve professionalism and quality of work life, and create a heightened sense of conviction regarding personal effectiveness. The correlation between empowerment and performance implies that empowerment is a synergistic organizational force that promotes achievement and collective actions in the best interest of the organization. Thus, sharing of knowledge among empowered teachers in various disciplines is vital in school communities.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the School Culture Survey, and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida. A *t* test of independent means determined if there was a statistically significant difference in the levels of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools. The study also sought a relationship between levels of teacher empowerment and school performance by conducting a Pearson's r correlation to compare the average quality points on the School Culture Survey for each selected low-performing and high-performing elementary school to its performance on the Mathematics portion of the Criterion Referenced Competency Test and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment. The results of the *t* test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the level of teacher empowerment at low-performing and high-performing elementary schools. The findings from the Pearson's r correlation indicated that there was a

moderately strong correlation between school performance and teacher empowerment. The findings of this study can assist school administrators in determining specific areas of teacher empowerment that require immediate attention in their schools. Further, this information can ensure teachers that receive the appropriate supports to become empowered.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment became a common topic in educational literature during the late 1980s. According to Short and Greer (1997), many of the problems associated with teacher work and teacher empowerment were both historical and political. Lightfoot (1986) used autonomy, choice, responsibility, participation, and decision making to define empowerment. While Bresden (1989) concurred with Lightfoot's definition, he added that empowerment was

> the concept of a systematic process by which teachers would assume greater responsibility in their professional work life is rooted in a large body of research in the areas of participatory decision making, professional development, job enrichment, as well as in the area of professional autonomy and teacher efficacy (p. 3).

According to Vavrus (1989), teachers often felt isolated in their work environment and empowerment was a means to foster a sense of community and belonging. Mareoff (1988) suggested three elements, status, knowledge, and decision making, comprised teacher empowerment and exacerbated the problem of teacher alienation. Short and Geer (1997) emphasized that, when teachers had no opportunity for decision making, they were unable to address issues outside of their classrooms that affected them indirectly. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Fernandez (2000) further suggested

leadership played a vital role in creating a school culture conducive to teacher empowerment.

Kanungo (1996) asserted the primary focus of teacher empowerment was teacher effectiveness. Mareoff (1988) described teachers' "sense of empowerment [as] a major way to make teachers more professional and improve their performance" (p. 4). The power to which he referred was "the power to exercise one's craft with confidence and to help shape the way that the job is done" (p. 4). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) found that teacher empowerment correlated with job satisfaction. Additionally, the researchers emphasized the ability to make choices about the events in teachers' environments fostered their empowerment. Teachers with low levels of intrinsic empowerment (motivation) were more apt to perceive their work environments negatively and to focus less on their job goals (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Rice and Schneider (1994) asserted teachers' perceived levels of influence "were positively correlated with levels of decision involvement, interest in decision issues and job satisfaction" (p. 55). Latham (1998) associated levels of job satisfaction with professional growth and sense of accomplishment. According to him, professional growth played a vital role in whether teachers chose to remain in the profession; therefore, it was a fundamental aspect of teacher empowerment.

Distrust in schools can be extremely detrimental to teacher empowerment (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). When trust does not exist between colleagues or between colleagues and supervisors, individuals take self-protective measures and remain guarded. According to Tyler and Kramer (1996), when trust does not exist, "people are increasingly unwilling to take risks, demand greater protections against the possibility of

betrayal, and increasingly insist on costly sanctioning mechanisms to defend their interests" (pp. 3-4). Principals have the responsibility of fostering a climate of trust and a culture that embraces collaboration. Consequently, school administrators must exhibit behaviors conducive to trust building, such as demonstrating humanistic qualities, consistency, integrity, and a willingness to share control (Zand, 1972). Kanungo (1992) noted that teachers who had control of their educational services and were free of micromanaging school administrators were more effective than teachers that felt isolated and powerless.

While decentralization could allow teachers to become active participants in decision making, the extent to which they exercised the privilege varied. Marks and Louis (1997) supported the idea that individual teacher empowerment was not the sole impact on student achievement but instead that the impact came from teachers that collectively focused on empowerment. Therefore, the quality of student learning could improve as a direct result of teacher empowerment. Marks and Louis also suggested that effective empowerment was contingent on the capacity for organizational learning, which emphasized the culture and constant social processing of knowledge regarding the vision and shared decision making of school stakeholders. Schools with a weak capacity for organizational learning lacked supportive school structure, facilitative leadership, shared commitment and collaboration, resources to improve competency levels, and a system for accountability and feedback. Schools with strong levels of capacity for organizational learning exercised high levels of empowerment, while schools with lower levels of collective teacher empowerment demonstrated weaker levels of capacity for organizational learning. The students, teachers, and administrators worked most

effectively and efficiently when high levels of teacher empowerment existed (Marks & Louis, 1997).

Empowered teachers experienced higher levels of job satisfaction and made more sound professional and instructional decisions compared to teachers with low levels of empowerment. Therefore, empowered teachers had the capacity to improve student achievement (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Dunst (1991) suggested that empowerment consisted of two issues: a) enabling experiences in an environment conducive for autonomy, choice, control, and responsibility; and b) affording the individuals opportunities to demonstrate existing competencies and to acquire and hone new competencies to enhance the overall organization. Short and Greer (1997) advocated using school restructuring as a strategy to improve teacher empowerment. School restructuring not only had a direct impact on teachers, but also on students and administrators. There was a correlation between the school's environment (climate) and attitudes (culture), and the ability to implement its mission (Ellis, 1988).

Statement of the Problem

The literature on teacher empowerment provides evidence of a positive correlation between school performance and teachers that report high levels of empowerment; however, few studies exist on the relationship between specific areas of teacher empowerment and school performance. Zelinski and Hoy (1983) reported that many teachers perceived their administrators as manipulative and felt that they had no true voice in their schools. Sprague (1992) added teachers' perception of lack of power was due to the nature of their work because many work in isolation and distrusted administrators. Byrk and Schneider (2002) reported that teachers performed better when

their administrators took an interest in their professional and personal well-being and made them feel included.

Short, Miller-Wood, and Johnson (1991) found that most teachers noted having little or no involvement in decision-making, thereby promoting an environment that fostered little or no teacher empowerment. Additionally, teachers lacking empowerment experienced low levels of self-efficacy. Consequently, teachers lacked the confidence to assume the roles of evaluator, monitor, rewarder, and manager, which linked to student achievement. Short et al. (1991) contended that, when teachers were not empowered, they lacked the skills necessary to address specific concerns related to student achievement. The study reported that teachers with low levels of empowerment were less equipped with the skills to address problems in the organization and experienced difficulty assessing areas of weakness compared to teachers with high levels of empowerment.

Conceptual Framework

Several reform and school improvement efforts emphasized teacher empowerment and its importance in professional decision making and student achievement (Rinehart & Short, 1994). Marks and Louis (1997) assumed that when teachers were active participants in the decision-making process, their commitment, expertise, and student achievement scores improved. Moreover, there was a strong correlation between teacher empowerment and increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, performance levels, collegiality, competence in subject matter and pedagogy, improved curriculum and instruction, and student achievement. Marks and Louis (1997) concluded that teacher empowerment was essential for academic improvement; however, many teachers did not perceive their instructional leaders as empowering. Nyhan (2000) that

suggested organizations with high levels of empowerment also demonstrated a strong level of organizational commitment.

Rinehart and Short (1994) found that teachers perceived opportunities for decision making to be empowering. Teacher participation in decision making improved their productivity, attitudes toward teaching, and overall performance. According to White (1992), increasing teacher participation in curriculum development enabled teachers to have a vested interest in effectively using instructional resources to best meet the needs of learners. Shared decision making positively affected student achievement because teachers added their different experiences and expertise to implement the vision of the school. Rinehart and Short (1994) asserted that the absence of empowerment was equivalent to being powerless. Sprague (1992) noted that teachers' perceptions of powerlessness manifested in the nature of their work. Many teachers expressed having no voice or mere appeasement from administrators that asked for their input. Zielinski and Hoy (1983) reported that teachers who often felt manipulated and isolated from school administrators due to the lack of influence they had within their school. The researchers suggested feelings of instructional powerlessness were most apparent when teachers perceived external factors produced such a strong force that their long-term influence impeded student achievement. According to Bresden (1989), teacher empowerment was a process through which teachers changed their perceptions of having little or no power within their organization and assumed greater professional responsibilities.

Edwards, Green, and Lyons (1996) compared teacher empowerment to coaching. Elliot (1994) noted that teachers who received coaching to assist them in solving problems had higher levels of empowerment. Teachers who were coached felt supported,

had a closer connection, reported a sense of urgency to improve and obtain a particular goal, and had a positive impact on student achievement. Teachers that did not feel coached were more likely to perceive their administrator as a dictator. Edwards, Green, and Lyons (1996) identified several strategies to increase personal teacher empowerment, including determining their current level of empowerment, becoming more proactive, assessing situations, and expanding personal networks. Duhon-Haynes (1996) suggested strategies to foster teacher empowerment, which included offering mutual respect, collaboration, and independence. Konczak, Stelly, and Trusty (2000) suggested that leaders who empowered their staff frequently verbalized support of others, displayed openness and a willingness to connect, and valued individual differences. Pickle (1991) added that highly motivated teachers were more likely to be empowered and had more positive student-teacher relationships compared to teachers that were not empowered.

Purpose/Rationale

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the School Culture Survey (SCS), and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions (RQ), with accompanying hypotheses (H), guided the study.

RQ1: Does the SCS evidence a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high--performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS evidences no statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high- performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS evidences a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high- performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

RQ2: Does the SCS reveal correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS reveals no correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS reveals a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high- performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho2: The SCS reveals a negative correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Significance of the Study

Schools are increasingly complex organizations and, as such, they are most successful when all stakeholders actively participate to achieve the goals and objectives of the institution. Due to the nature of school complexity, it is imperative that teachers, the persons most closely involved with students, are empowered to implement the vision

of the school. However, problems arise when teachers perceive support from administration differently from its intent (Short & Greer, 1997). In a study by White (1992), teachers not receiving appropriate supports were more likely to become isolated and discouraged, thereby negatively affecting student achievement. Teacher morale was higher, communication between teachers and administrators was more positive, and students exhibited higher levels of motivation in schools where teachers were empowered (White, 1992).

McBride and Skau (1995) noted greater intrinsic motivation among empowered teachers to enhance instructional strategies for their students. Further, these authors asserted, "Empowered teachers create learning environments that engage students as significant partners in the learning process . . . [where they are] encouraged to become independent, self-motivated learners" (p. 269). The current study can aid principals in determining which areas of teacher empowerment can have the most positive impact on student performance.

Study Limitations

Sample size, time, scope, and geographic region limit the study. Due to access and convenience, the study considered only five small districts in two states, Georgia and Florida. The study collected no qualitative data, such as from small focus groups, to determine the perceptions of the leadership or faculty at each school. Finally, the study has time limits, examining school performance for only three consecutive school terms: 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of clarification, the following definitions applied throughout this study.

Average quality point score. The score generated by dividing the total quality points by the number of response choices (5) for each SCS question. The score has a range from 0 – 100. SCS items with an average quality point score of 70 or higher indicate a high quality area, and items with a score of 60 or below indicate an area in need of development.

Collaboration. "An interactive process based on joint problem-solving and a set of commonly held beliefs, norms, and practices" (Olsen, 1986, p. 12).

County masking. A group of codes used to mask the following five counties in the study: two South Georgia County School Districts coded as SGD 1 and SGD 2, and three Florida County School Districts coded as FD 1, FD 2, and FD 3.

Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). The Georgia state assessment exam administered to students in grades three through eight in the areas of Language Arts, Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies

Directive leadership. A leadership style characterized by direct supervision, monitoring, and evaluation implemented in a systematic manner.

Empowerment. Affording individual autonomy, choice, responsibility, participation in collective decision making, professionalism, opportunities to obtain appropriate resources distributed in an equitable and transparent manner, and trusting relationships with excellent supervisors and managers.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment (FCAT). The Florida state assessment exam administered to students in grades 3-11 in the areas of writing, reading, math, and science.

Feedback. Information about an individual's performance; constructive criticism.

Impact. The level of success an individual experiences with a particular group.

Items. Specific questions or statements on the SCS pertaining to the theme of empowerment; numbers 1, 6, 8, 10, 20, 26, 29, 30, 35, 44, and 45.

Mutuality. When two parties share ownership in a common issue.

Organizational learning. A process in which the outcome results in the organization acquiring a new skill for improving learning or performance.

Participative leadership. Joint decision making by the superior and his or her employees (Koopman & Wierdsma, 1998).

Professional growth. Opportunities provided for staff members to increase and display their level of competence and character.

School climate. "The relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools" (Hoy, 1990, p. 152).

School culture. The basic assumptions, norms, values, and cultural artifacts shared by school members (Maslowski, 2001).

School Culture Survey. An instrument created by Green (2007) to measure culture in relation to ten organizational themes: Collaborative Decision Making, Concern for School Stakeholders, Continual School Improvement Focus, Empowerment, Human

(Needs) Resources, Intention/Direction, Leadership, Management or Excellence, Professionalism, and Teaming.

School masking. Codes used to mask the identity of the three low-performing and three high-performing elementary schools in the study. Low-performing schools in Georgia were coded as GAE Lo 1 and GAE Lo 2 with the low-performing Florida school as FLE Lo 1. The high-performing school in Georgia was coded as GAE Hi 1 and the high-performing schools in Florida coded as FLE Hi 1 and FLE Hi 2.

School performance. In South Georgia and Florida, the basis for judging school performance is on the average percentage of students passing the mathematics portion of the CRCT and FCAT state assessments. Low-performing schools are those with a pass rate of seventy-two percent or below in mathematics and high-performing schools have a pass rate of eighty percent or above.

Self-efficacy. How teachers perceive their ability to assist student learning and to develop programs that improve student learning.

Shared decision making. Decision making that equally involves leaders and subordinates.

Status. The way in which teachers perceive their professional relationships with stakeholders.

Theme. A group of similar questions on the School Culture Survey that cluster in one of the following categories: Collaborative Decision Making, Concern for School Stakeholders, Continual School Improvement Focus, Empowerment, Human (Needs) Resources, Intention/Direction, Leadership, Management or Excellence, Professionalism, and Teaming (Green, 2007).

Trust. The "willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the study and identified the purpose and significance, the research questions, the study setting, the study methodology, and the operational terms. Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant research on teacher empowerment as it pertains to the themes of the SCS and school performance. Chapter 3 offers the study methodology, describing the population, research questions, survey instrumentation, and data analysis. Chapter 4 contains a detailed discussion and analysis of the study findings, and Chapter 5 summarizes the study and suggests areas for further research and practice in the field.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Empowerment is a pervasive theme in all types of organizations, including business, industry, and service organizations. Empowerment has become an area of interest for school organizations and school participants (Girer, Michael, & Short, 1991; Lightfoot, 1986; Mareoff, 1988). Empowerment is a process whereby school participants achieve competence and take charge of their own growth. As a result, they are able to solve problems independently and develop confidence to use their knowledge and skills for improvement. Mareoff (1988) described teacher empowerment as a major way to "make teachers more professional and to improve their performance [or] the power to exercise one's craft with confidence and to help shape the way that the job is to be done" (p. 4). Personal power, according to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), emerged from choices an individual made based on events that occur within their environment.

Bolin (1989) defined teacher empowerment as "investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgment about what and how to teach" (p. 82). Lee and Koh (2001) supported this definition and emphasized an environment conducive to individuals being treated as professionals. Lightfoot (1986) noted the impact of empowerment on individuals within an organization rather than to the group as a whole. According to Lightfoot, empowerment afforded individuals autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation in organizational decision making. Jenkins (1994) added "to empower is to

give the stakeholder share in the movement and direction of the enterprise" (p. 149). Rinehart and Short (1994) expanded on the concept with empirical research related to education by constructing six dimensions of teacher empowerment: a) participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly impacted their work, b) teacher impact as an indicator in influencing school life, c) teacher status concerning professional respect from colleagues, d) autonomy related to teachers taking control over certain aspects of their work lives. e) professional development opportunities to promote continuous learning and expand skills, and f) self-efficacy and the ability to help students learn.

In the 1990s, several educational reform measures emphasized teacher empowerment. While teacher professionalism and participation in the decision-making process were the primary goals, the results often involved teachers as passive recipients of reform initiatives (Maeroff, 1988). Negative effects on several educational environments resulted in the enforcement of centralization and bureaucratization. Centralized mandates stripped educators of the flexibility and freedom to meet the needs of diverse groups within the community (Cuban, 1990).

Collaborative Decision Making

Short and Greer (1997) found professionals more effective in organizations less centralized in decision making, and in those that provided more autonomy and a participative environment. The authors noted that individuals working in those environments reported having fewer formal rules and regulations and demonstrated a higher degree of competence. Providing teachers with a significant role in school decision making is a fundamental component in empowerment. For teacher involvement in decision making to occur, individuals had to perceive their involvement as genuine and

that their opinions would directly affect the outcome of the decision (Short & Greer, 1997). Teachers were often less willing to participate actively in decision making if they viewed administrators as merely soliciting their opinions and making final decisions without earnestly considering their input (Short, Miller-Wood, & Johnson, 1991). Ashton and Webb (1986) concluded that teachers frequently became frustrated over their inability to provide input on decisions. Teachers indicated rare consultations based on the administrative view of their poor decision-making skills. However, when teachers had the opportunity to make critical decisions, it reaffirmed that their ideas were sound and reestablished trust in their sound professional judgment (Short, Miller-Wood, & Johnson, 1991).

Shared decision making encouraged collaboration, addressed problems efficiently and effectively, and made staff members more conscious of their choices (Rosenhotlz, 1989). The primary focus of collaborative dialogue was on evaluative insights about the overall quality of the school instructional program. As a result, the environment became conducive for growth and the school ran more effectively. Teachers were more apt to participate and assume ownership, thereby causing their level of commitment to increase (Rosenholtz, 1989). Smylie (1994) contended that the more responsibility teachers have for student learning, the greater their level of accountability.

As a recent reform movement, empowerment contends that local educators, support personnel, and administrators can provide the solutions to problems that exist in schools, rather than being the individuals contributing to the problems. However, schools must be deregulated and have more flexibility to address instructional and community issues properly (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Glickman, 1989). In considering the

empowerment/school restructuring movement, professionals from various disciplines expressed that collaboration would assist issues that affected students and faculty members (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Hord, 1986; Jones & Maloy, 1988; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Little, 1982; Rosenfield, 1988; Schmuck & Runkel, 1985; Scott & Smith, 1987; West & Idol, 1990; Will, 1986).

According to Passow (1986), school improvement "must involve changes in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, understandings, and values of staff; in the organizational relationships of the school; in the climate and environment of the school; and in the transactions between teachers and learners" (p. 216). Several questions addressed the correlation between collaboration and school restructuring. Would collaboration aid in the sharing of best practices among professionals? Could educational collaboration bring about mutual empowerment by promoting shared ownership to address both county level and school level concerns?

The term collaboration commonly describes a plethora of situations and activities taking place in schools. It is essential in improving student achievement and school effectiveness. Brown, Wyne, Blackburn, and Powell (1979) used the term consultation, a concept similar to collaboration and applicable to situations involving educational collaboration. The researchers described school consultation as a process based on relationships with the following criteria: a) mutual trust among parties and open communication, b) joint approaches to identifying problems, c) use of personal resources to identify strategies to resolve issues and concerns, and d) shared responsibility in identifying problems and implementing programs for improvement. This definition removed the expert as the primary individual providing guidance and promoted an

environment where other parties became involved. Further, skilled workers were facilitative in soliciting the assistance of others in shared and mutual problem solving.

Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986) offered the term *collaborative consultation* to describe a means of providing special education services to children with disabilities. They defined collaborative consultation as "an interactive process which enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems. The outcome is enhanced, altered, and different from the original solutions that any team member would produce independently" (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986, p. 1). Curtis and Meyers (1988) developed a similar definition, noting collaborative consultation as "a collaborative problems-solving process in which two or more persons [consultant(s) and consultee(s)] engage in efforts to benefit one or more person [client(s)] for whom they bear some level of responsibility, within a context of reciprocal interactions" (p. 36).

West and Idol (1990) reported that the Brown, Wyne, Blackburn, and Powell (1979), the Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, and Nevin (1986) and the Curtis and Myers (1988) definitions shared the critical concepts of mutuality and reciprocity. Mutuality involved the parties in an organization having shared ownership in a common issue, while reciprocity exposed both parties to similar information. Additionally, both parties had equal access to the discussions, decision making, and problem solving regarding common issues.

Definitions of collaboration expanded into curriculum, supervision, and educational administration. Olsen (1986) described collaboration as "interactive processes based on joint problem solving and a set of commonly held beliefs, norms, and

practices" (p. 12). Schaffer and Bryant (1983) referred to higher institutions of learning and local public schools when defining collaboration as

> shared decision-making in governance, planning, delivery, and evaluation of programs. It is a pluralistic form of education where people of dissimilar backgrounds work together with equal status. It may be seen as working *with* rather than working *on* a person. (p. 3)

Scott and Smith (1987) broadened the term by providing specific characteristics of schools that implemented collaboration. When referring to a collaborative school, the term implied that individuals engaged in activities to assist their colleagues in effective instruction. Thus, shared norms were essential in collaboration because they provided a foundation for school expectations. Many norms were implicit in nature and determined the psychological and social well-being of members in the organization. According to Schmuck and Runkel (1985), when norms were present, people felt more confident that others understood their perspective; therefore, their behavior was more likely indicative of the group expectations.

While norms generally dictate acceptable behavior, they also determine unacceptable behavior. Little (1982) described the critical practices of adaptability as the fundamental behaviors regarding collaborations. As such, teachers would have continuous discussions regarding best practices as opposed to focusing on the negative aspects of their colleagues' teaching styles, would have regular observations, and would receive constructive feedback. In the process, colleagues would assist each other with effective teaching.

West (1989) defined educational collaboration as emphasizing interactive planning and problem solving. The collaboration consisted of interrelated steps: a) setting goals, b) collecting data, c) identifying and thoroughly analyzing problems effectively, d) developing alternative solutions to problems, e) creating effective action plans, f) implementing effective action plans, g) conducting follow-up evaluations, and h) initiating redesigns. Team interactions throughout the process revealed respect and trust from and for both parties and emphasized open communication and careful consideration of concerns from various perspectives. Consensual decision-making expertise from various disciplines taking ownership was productive in collaboration. Collaboration should aid in improving strategies, competency, and behaviors from stakeholders at different levels, including students, teachers, communities, and systems.

According to Irwin (1990), collaboration was a primary determinant of teacher empowerment. Teachers that frequently collaborated were more likely to take risks, have a mentor, and be less isolated. Furthermore, they were more likely to exude professionalism and have high self-esteem. Morris and Nunnery (1994) cited collaboration caused veteran teachers to have a strong influence on new teachers in the field. Collaboration created an environment wherein there was an exchange of professional knowledge, thereby empowering new teachers and developing a greater skill level.

On the other hand, increasing the level of teacher participation could create a school climate that would foster a level of discomfort. As involvement increased, there was a greater likelihood of conflict when teachers expressed different philosophies and methods of instruction. As teachers became empowered, they gained awareness of their

ability to identify problems, discuss and disagree professionally and, ultimately, to assume responsibility for solving problems in the most efficient and effective manner (Short et al., 1991).

Concern for School/Stakeholders and Continual School Improvement

The empowerment of teachers, administrators, and students was a key component in school restructuring and an integral part of the restructuring paradigm of Murphy and Everston (Murphy & Everston, 1990; Short et al., 1991). Frymirer (1987) stated, "In any attempt to improve education, teachers are central" (p. 9). Rosenholtz (1989) added that "the culture of a school changes significantly when experienced teachers stop functioning in isolation and start solving problems related to students' learning collectively" (p. 12). To improve schools, it is imperative to focus on the roles in effective decision making that includes all participants. It is also critical to address those areas of greatest concern to the organization. Moreover, students must be included. Critical variables identified by the Empowered School District Project (Short et al., 1991) in creating empowered schools included: a) the need for a process that makes empowerment evolutionary; b) the need for the knowledge base and school structures related to empowerment to evolve; c) the need for an environment conducive to risk taking and innovation; d) the need for trust at all levels within the organization; e) the need for an outside facilitator with a powerful impact, in constant contact with other schools, and involved in empowerment to assist in the change process; f) the need to restructure the role of the principal to an enabler considerate of staff needs; and g) the need to examine critical incidents in the promotion of evolutionary shifts in the empowerment process.

Short and Johnson (2003) contended that teacher effectiveness was the main driving force behind the empowerment movement in education. Educators that created and controlled their instructional strategies free from unreasonable administrative demands were more efficient and effective than teachers who felt isolated and powerless. When teachers were more efficient and effective, student engagement, discipline, teacher morale, and school environment improved. Schools became more productive and learning was more meaningful (Short & Johnson, 2003).

According to Ellis (1988), the correlation between the school environment and the successful implementation of its mission could produce a negative impact if the frequency and types of discord and the successful or unsuccessful management of that discord impinged on that environment. Further, leaders should be skillful in using their power to increase teacher commitment (Rahim, 1989). He further emphasized that administrators should promote an environment of trust and not assert their authority in an abusive manner.

Fairman and Clark (1983), in their assessment of the impact of conflict on school climate, suggested, "The greatest problem that it [conflict] presents . . . is interference with the establishment and maintenance of other priorities within the organization" (pp. 93-94). However, it was unknown whether conflict and the use of power affected the way in which teachers perceived empowerment (Short & Johnson, 2003). The source of leadership power was critical in the influence they achieved. French and Raven (1959) organized a typology to identify five power bases: a) Legitimate Power, the legitimate right of the leader usually by virtue of the position that the leader holds to prescribe or control behavior; b) Coercive Power, the leader's control over punishment; c) Reward

Power, the leader's control over reward; d) Expert Power, special knowledge or expertness; and e) Referent Power, the subordinates' desire to identify with the leader.

Ashton and Webb (1986) posited that teachers' self-esteem increased when they perceived a completed task as worthwhile, done in a competent manner, and received recognition for their efforts. Lightfoot (1986) supported their findings, concluding that good schools improved because of the respect and support teachers received from stakeholders. The challenges they faced provided opportunities for professional and personal growth. Additionally, both negative and positive feedback indicated the impact an individual had on other members of the organization. Blasé (1982) asserted a correlation between low motivation and little reward for individual effort. Unfortunately, if teachers did not receive appropriate recognition, it could produce less involvement with students, thus adversely affecting them. Teachers desired success in the classroom and enjoyed support from administration, colleagues, and their community; it provided them with a sense of purpose (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Status referred to teachers' perceptions of their professional relationships with stakeholders. It encompassed the respect, admiration, and knowledge they received from their peers, classroom parents, and administrators. Status also reflected the views of others in the community. According to Lortie (1975), "The economic realities of teaching play an important role in its nature: they undergird its social position and the shape of careers within the occupation" (p. 8). Mareoff (1988) claimed that average or low salaries and other circumstances associated with teaching could cause teachers to lack self-respect. Further, teachers face constant scrutiny regarding their competence, particularly related to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. High expectations from the

public and, in some instances, poor working conditions can create a tense working environment. Improper facilities, paperwork, and interruptions during instructional time contributed to teachers displaying feelings of low status. Discord with community members and boards of education, lack of parental support, and duties unrelated to instruction further enhanced teachers' feelings of low status. Ashton and Webb (1986) asserted the loss of autonomy characteristic of bureaucratic organizations affected status. Teachers expressed lack of consultation on critical decisions involving their work life in schools.

For schools to become more productive, many legislators and educators supported decentralizing bureaucratic authority (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Rowan, 1990; Sykes, 1990). Decentralization promoted an environment conducive to shared decision making for those individuals actually working in the schools (Darling-Hammond, 1988). Removing centralization from site-based management empowered teachers to varying extents and improved worker productivity. Individuals effectively solved problems through shared knowledge (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003). It afforded teachers the opportunity to consider outside factors to enhance student learning. The teachers could consider the ways in which the school and community conditions affected learning (Darling-Hammond, 1988).

King, Louis, Marks, and Peterson (1996) noted commonly exercised patterns in restructuring schools. An administrator, a particular group of teachers, or specific district personnel had authority. Since the majority of teachers typically felt some discomfort level with openly expressing their concerns due to punitive repercussions, many did not collectively disclose their opinions. As a result, this caused miscommunication among the

subgroups and the consequent discord interfered with school improvement initiatives. The study also noted that several site-based managed restructured schools did not benefit from increasing teachers' influence. Many were centralized and did not permit educators to interact with best practices. Instead, many promoted an environment of isolation and emphasized individual rather than collective responsibility. In addition, feedback was rare, including lack of information on the positive and negative consequences of adapting to change (Louis et al., 1996).

According to Sergiovanni and Moore (1985), autonomy in schools was essential if they were to run effectively. It enabled individuals within the organization to adapt to the needs of the students and community. However, autonomy in the educational arena can be difficult at times because of the conflict that exists between professionalization and bureaucratization (Short & Greer, 1997). Sweetland and Hoy (2000) strongly emphasized that most definitions of empowerment focused heavily on the concept of autonomy (Lightfoot, 1986), while others focused heavily on teacher participation in organizational decision making (Rinehart& Short, 1994). Moreover, research provided insight on teacher empowerment according to the specific decisions for which teachers were empowered, in which they were active participants (Duke & Gansneder, 1990; Rice & Schneidner, 1994), and in the specific processes and type of context that engaged teachers in those decisions (Rhinehart & Short, 1994; Short, 1998; Short & Greer, 1997). Sweetland and Hoy (2000) asserted research on teacher empowerment indicated active teacher participation was paramount in decisions relating to curriculum development, student life, and fiscal matters. They further considered active participation an essential dimension of empowerment, and suggested two conditions under which their

involvement was most effective. First, decisions must address areas of greatest concern to teachers, issues connected to teaching and learning, such as school operations and management, students' school experiences, work lives of teachers, and control of classroom instruction (Marks & Louis, 1997). Second, teachers must see a direct connection between their participation and the decisions that are made (Short & Greer, 1997).

Researchers asserted a correlation between teacher empowerment and instructional improvements. Several participatory decision making structures focused on the area of curriculum and instruction (Byrk, Camburn, & Louis, 1996; David, 1994; Marks & Louis, 1997; Smylie, 1994). Instructional improvement occurred in schools with strong professional cultures that implemented instruction-related decision making (Byrk et al., 1996; Smylie, 1994).

Sharing knowledge between individuals in various disciplines is vital in school communities. A primary goal of social processing, also described as team learning, involved members agreeing about improving the performance of the organization (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthey, 1996). Social processing rarely occurred collectively in schools. Instead, information circulated in a rather fragmented manner between departments and grade levels. Louis and Marks (1999) argued the processing of school-wide information was essential for organizational learning.

Creating a professional learning community is paramount to improving a school's capacity for organizational learning. It provides a pathway for professional growth. Professional learning communities could afford teachers the opportunity to devise creative lessons and solutions and prevent feelings of isolation (Karsten, Voncken, &

Voorjuis, 2000). Professional learning communities promote an environment wherein teachers constantly reflect on their practices, improve pedagogical techniques, openly share successful instructional and behavioral strategies with their colleagues, and collaborate in designing new curricula, and establishing norms that support improved student achievement (Louis & Marks, 1999).

Empowering

Administrative interest in empowerment often linked relationships between employee empowerment and effective performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Hall, 1994; Schein, 1992; Yukl, 1989). Empowerment influenced several requisites for employee success, including: autonomy (freedom to do the work), knowledge (skills to perform the tasks), importance (a sense of having an invested interest), and feedback (information about the level of performance). The correlation between empowerment and performance implied that empowerment was a synergistic organizational force that promoted achievement and collective actions in the best interest of the organization (Guacher & Coffee, 1993; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Spreitzer, 1995).

Advocates of strategies to enhance teacher empowerment frequently argued that people who worked closely with students made the most responsive decisions (Chion-Kenney, 1994). Research on empowerment in the workplace supported this contention (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). Individuals that performed tasks for those benefiting from their services were more apt to understand the intricacies of the job. Moreover, they should "make the decision about how the work can best be done" (Belasco & Strayer, 1994, p. 34).

Empowerment promoted teacher leadership, improved professionalism and the quality of work life, and created a heightened sense of conviction in regard to personal effectiveness (Bolin, 1989; Katzenmayer & Moller, 2001). Organizations benefited due to effective implementation of school reforms and an increase in student achievement scores (Martin & Crossland, 2000; Short & Greer, 1997). Nevertheless, studies suggested that several work environments were not empowering, especially when teachers' work routines became monotonous. Separation from peers, the pressures of time constraints, and understaffing hindered their involvement in various school-related activities (Hallinger & Richardson, 1988). School structures and organizational school systems operated as a means of establishing conformity, discouraging innovation, risk taking, and existed for the primary purpose of maintaining a type of governance structure for control (Blau & Alba, 1982; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

Research on empowerment in the areas of business, health care, social services, and education (Jenkins, 1994; Maeroff, 1988; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997; Staples, 1990; Wilson, 1994) suggested alternative conceptual vantage points on the term, more specifically, the structural/managerial frame and the psychological/cognitive. The structural perspective of empowerment emphasized sharing and transferring power from higher to lower groups or individuals within an organization (Hollander & Offerman, 1990; Osburn, Moran, Musselwhite, & Zenger, 1990). Structural empowerment was a process by which a leader or manager distributed power to subordinates. In this context, power was a possession of the individual given formal authority over subordinates and resources in the organization.

In contrast, the psychological construct received far less attention. Empowerment in this regard was more intrinsic motivation as opposed to managerial practices used to increase levels of power within the organization. The psychological construct emphasized employee perception regarding their organization rather than something managers offered employees. In this framework, empowerment was "a subjective state of mind where an employee perceived that he or she was exercising efficacious control over meaningful work" (Potterfield, 1999, p. 51). Empowerment was contingent on the foundation of conditions feasible for "heightening motivations for task accomplishment through development of a strong sense of personal efficacy" (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 474).

The structural perspective on empowerment focused on the way in which organizational design influenced individual perceptions of empowerment. Teams in self-managed schools received praise for providing environments that enabled teachers to connect and develop a sense of potency (English & Hill, 1990; Imber & Neidt, 1990; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). When school teams had appropriate support, they became environments in which teachers worked together efficiently and effectively to resolve issues, shared duties and responsibilities, and learned and honed new skills (Dee & Henkin, 2001). Furthermore, research suggested that the way in which empowerment characterized an employee's relationship with an organization could strongly influence a sense of connectedness and affect the decision to remain an active member of that organization (Ko, 1996).

Human (Needs) Resources

Trust, a major component of effective organizations (Lane, 1998), could create a strong foundation for well-functioning committees in school organizations (Carnoy &

cooperative employees collaborated and how well they interacted during a crisis (Diffie-Crouch, 1984; Mirshra, 1996; Mirshra & Morrissey, 1990; Zand, 1972). Recent organizational research emphasized interpersonal trust as imperative for promoting individual and organizational effectiveness (Butler, 1991; Byrk & Schneider, 2002; McAllister, 1995; Tarter & Hoy, 1988). Cook and Wall (1980) cited trust between individuals and groups within an organization as the primary factor predicting the long-term performance and well-being of employees. Additionally, several studies confirmed that interpersonal trust closely aligned with several organizational variables, such as quality of communication, performance, citizenship behavior, problem solving, individual risk taking, and cooperation (Baier, 1986; Whitener et al., 1998). Porter et al. (1975) suggested "where there is trust there is the feeling that others will not take advantage of [another]" (p. 479). Similarly, Luhmann (1979) asserted a strong correlation between interpersonal trust and the emotional connectedness of group members. When a strong emotional connection existed among group members, they were more likely to capitalize on short-term gains and reciprocal relationships were apt to develop.

Rotter (1976, 1980) encompassed the context of social learning theory in the definition of interpersonal trust. The theory emphasized that an individual's word, promise, and oral or written statement of another individual or group held some merit. Current research on interpersonal trust (Deutsch, 1962; Gambetta, 1988; Zand, 1972), Whitener et al. (1998) concluded that interpersonal trust indicated the expectation that the other party would behave in an appropriate manner. Consequently, an individual had little control over whether the other member would fulfill his or her obligations; however, it required dependency on the other individual.

Lewis and Weigart (1985) noted that interpersonal trust affected individuals both cognitively and affectively. Making choices of whom to trust and the parameters for that trust could influence cognition. However, others asserted certain components, such as competence, responsibility (Butler, 1991), dependability, and reliability (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Zucker, 1986), must be present to foster trusting relationships (McAllister, 1995). Shapiro (1987) argued that if these essential components were non-existent, trust would never develop.

Trust in an immediate supervisor produced interpersonal trust that evolved through daily interactions between the trustor and trustee (Costigan et al., 1998). An employee might determine the trustworthiness of a supervisor by their character and decorum (Buts et al., 2001). The more an employee trusts his or her supervisor, the greater the likelihood for positive social interaction and a positive climate in the work environment. Moreover, studies noted that innovative behavior was a direct result of having trust in one's supervisor (Tan & Tan, 2000).

Culbert and McDonough (1986) contended, that "empowerment is the key to understanding trust and trusting relationships in an organization" (p. 182). Further, "people perceive, interpret and evaluate the world according to mental models that they develop in interaction with their physical, social, and institutional environments" (Nooteboom, 2002). To be more specific, individuals were less likely to internalize a system in an organization they did not consider empowering, either professionally or personally. Employees must have confidence in the competence of their administration. The administration should understand the value and contributions to the organization of

each individual and make improvements to ensure future success (Culbert & McDonough, 1986).

Intent/Direction

The manner in which members in an organization perceived empowerment largely determined the level of motivation in an organization (Marks & Louis, 1997; Rinehart & Short, 1994; Sprietzer, 1996). In many instances, the administrator's primary responsibilities were to plan, control, and articulate how to achieve school improvement goals. However, in the participative process, teachers actively sought strategies for school improvement and shared responsibility in developing activities that addressed them (Terry, 1996). Moreover, participative leadership enabled teachers to be directly involved in the decision-making process, provided them with more autonomy (Wood & Bandura, 1989), and strengthened their professionalism (Firestone & Pennell, 1993); the fundamental components of empowerment. Teachers that took an active role in decision making helped ensure the availability of accurate information during the process. Therefore, participative leadership enhanced their self-efficacy and self-determination (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Researchers studied the relationship between school organizational capacity and teacher empowerment for more than two decades (Levin, 1991; Malen, Ogwa, & Kranz, 1990; Wohlsteter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994). The topic continued to surface in educational research, from the basic conditions schools required for empowerment to function properly to the conditions in which learning was optimal and teaching staff had the opportunity to create true professional learning communities (Levin, 1991; Marks & Louis, 1997, Robertson, Wohlstetter, & Mohrman, 1995). Organizational learning was

similar to individual learning with the process resulting in skill acquisition that improved learning; whereas, team empowerment indicated the level of personal empowerment exhibited by group members (Kirkman & Rosman, 2000). However, organizations learned in a manner that transcended and maximized what each individual member learned. It served as a collective activity that undoubtedly improved the organization. The group developed their own distinct culture while engaged in common activities (Cook & Yanow, 1993). Arygris and Schon (1974) strongly emphasized the social cultural aspects as opposed to the individual in different contexts.

Elmore, Peterson, and McCarthey (1996) focused on the intellectual, social, and cultural components of an organization. They defined organizational learning as the social processing of knowledge through which individuals shared knowledge in an environment that fostered constructing clear, commonly held ideas. While organizational learning was a conscious cognitive process, it often developed over time from mutual understanding among group members. Senge (1990) supported this perspective, asserting that systems thinking shared mental models and that team-based learning created a strong foundation for building a shared vision.

The culture that surrounds core technology could produce a lifeline for both individual and collective learning (Schein, 1985). When individual teachers placed themselves in a collaborative group with a primary focus on the core technology of the organization (e.g., a team focused on the curriculum and instructional best practices), they created a culture reflective of the groups' values, beliefs, and norms and shared by faculty and students (Hoffman, Hoffman, & Guldemond, 2001). Learning occurred once individuals in the group collectively addressed concerns and developed solutions. Since

learning involved multiple processes, group dynamics could create barriers, wherein learning is contingent on the structure of the organization (Marks & Louis, 1997).

Marks and Louis (1997) suggested a close relationship between teacher empowerment and school capacity for organizational learning. They argued that, in order for school capacity for organizational learning to be strong, teachers must take an active role in the decision-making process. However, teachers could only effectively exercise empowerment when the level for school learning capacity was adequate.

Findings from studies of school organizational capacity resulted in the identification of structural conditions essential to a positive educational environment. In this type of environment, critical dimensions, such as social, intellectual, and cultural dimensions, ensured that schools run effectively. The conceptualization evolved from research on school restructuring (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthey, 1996; Newmann & Associates, 1996) and developmental traditions of older organizations. The traditions focused heavily on group dynamics and the processes of tasks rather than on the competency of individual members in the organization.

Groups and teams within organizations sometimes have the difficult task of creating an environment where learning takes place for individuals and the entire group (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Draft & Huber, 1987; Hedberg, 1981; Senge, 1990; Simsek & Louis, 1994). Many researchers on teacher empowerment suggested that high-involvement theory played a vital role in organizational capacity (Lawler, 1986; Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1992). High-involvement organizations are those in which participatory management is successful in achieving performance gains. High-performance organizations strived to address the following issues: balancing power

within an organization, providing opportunities for skill growth to all members within the organization, providing feedback and constructive criticism on performance tasks, and providing verbal praise and tangible rewards (Robertson et al., 1995; Wohlsetter et al., 1994). Louis and Marks (1999) described capacity for organizational learning using the dimensions of structure, shared commitment and collaborative activity, knowledge and skills, leadership, and accountability.

Leadership

Research (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Bresden, 1989; Zielinski & Hoy, 1983) indicated that teacher empowerment required the school principal to create a collaborative professional climate that fostered trust and respect for teachers. Furthermore, research indicated teacher empowerment as contingent upon the principal's educational level, experiences and comfort with participative decision making (Griffith, 2003). Short, Greer, and Melvin (1994) emphasized teacher empowerment was most apparent in schools where the principal had a strong desire to empower teachers and put strategies in place to promote teacher empowerment. Lightfoot (1986) suggested empowering principals had a natural ability to envision how their leadership would influence their environments. Fullan (2001) further emphasized that teachers had higher levels of empowerment when principals created a school culture that supported opportunities for collective problem solving and shared experiences.

Glickman (1991) suggested that principals of successful schools constantly strived to serve in the capacity of instructional leaders. They were primarily responsible for shifting from decision makers to facilitators (Aronstein, Marlow, & Desilets, 1990; Stimsom & Applebaum, 1988). The work of Bolman and Deal (1991) on organizational

frames indicated that the principal's perception of school organization strongly influenced his or her view of the educational process. These frames dictated the manner in which the principal asserted authority and distributed power. Bolman and Deal (1991) identified several ways in which leaders frame an organization: a) viewing the organization as a rational or structural entity responding to structured processes and activities to achieve the goals of an organization; b) creating a human relations component that enabled individuals to feel worthwhile and positive about working in the organization; and c) a cultural/symbolic component where norms, symbols, culture, and history were imperative for organizational effectiveness. Bolman and Deal (1991) further suggested that the actions principals took to frame an organization influenced their leadership style. Principals with a preference for the political frame were more inclined to participate in coalition building. Bolman and Deal (1991) stated, "As political arenas, organizations provide a setting for the ongoing interplay of interests and agendas of powerful individuals and groups" (p. 225). Therefore, the political frame emphasized situations involving scarce resources and different preferences where unlike needs collided (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Principals who viewed the organization through a rational or structural frame were apt to use rational planning, committees, and reorganizing as feasible ways to lead an organization towards success. This view was the focus of the structural frame, the way an organization developed and combined specialized roles, functions, and groups and utilized vertical and horizontal methods of management (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Principals as structural leaders must be cognizant of bureaucratic structures that require rational-legal authority, formality in positions, rules, regulations, and procedures (Blasé

& Blasé, 2001; Bolman & Deal, 1991). The way in which he or she successfully influenced subordinates and developed commitments for specific organizational tasks determined the effectiveness of a principal (Yukl, Falbe, & Youn, 1993).

The human resource frame supported the premise that individual skills, insights, ideas, energy, and commitment were an organization's most important resource (Bolman & Deal, 1991). People, not mandates, regulations, and directives, determined an organization's success (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993). Bolman and Deal (1991) asserted that human resource leaders should encourage and empower subordinates. Kouzes and Posner (1987) noted that when leaders were humanistic, there was a greater likelihood that the organizational climate would be conducive to forming positive social bonds between leaders and followers. Thus, both parties could reach their fullest potential (Griffin et al., 2001) and benefit from one another. Additionally, research (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Barth, 1988) indicated that principals perceived as serving in the capacity of human resource managers promoted an environment with greater job satisfaction and commitment. The culture in these environments focused on accomplishments and recognition.

Sergiovanni (1991) asserted it is imperative to examine the cultural and symbolic leadership styles of successful schools critically. As schools strive to become symbolic organizations, it is only natural that cultural concerns become the core of the organization. Bolman and Deal (1991) explained that humans developed and utilized symbols to "bring meaning out of chaos, clarity out of confusion, and predictability out of mystery" (p. 253). They further suggested that principals who frame schools as symbolic

organizations should create coalitions and develop a culture by telling stories, introducing icons, and establishing rituals.

Leaders play a vital role in providing structured work environments. Ultimately, the behavior of the leader affected the reactions of members within an organization (Durham, Knight, & Locke, 1997). Strong leadership was paramount for the development of effective teams (Bass, 1997; Manz & Sims, 1987; Tjosvold, 1995) and largely determined the outcome of a team. Team leaders were undoubtedly accountable for their organization's performance. Directive leaders were typically managers, whereas participative leaders created an environment that fostered the sharing of knowledge (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003).

Those that supported a directive style of leadership argued that individuals in authority should carefully monitor staff members to ensure they successfully met and exceeded goals (Cropanzo, James, & Citera, 1993; Fiedler & House, 1988). Predetermined measurable goals helped decrease ambiguity and aided teacher competency, thereby enabling teachers to work both efficiently and effectively. Highly directive leaders frequently provided constructive feedback so that teachers were able to remain highly focused (McDonough & Barczak, 1991). Directive leadership fostered monitoring and evaluation implemented in a systematic manner. It encouraged teachers to examine their practices critically. In turn, they made important decisions on whether to continue or terminate instructional activities, participate in professional development, and apply for federal grants. Directive leadership allowed discretionary authority when using resources to increase teachers' role in performance (Rosenau & Moran, 1993).

Several reforms promoted participative leadership, which encouraged joint decision making by administrators and employees (Koopman & Wierdsma, 1998). This leadership style offered several advantages. It aided members in making more quality decisions (Scully, Kilpatrick, & Locke, 1995), improved the quality of their work lives (Somech, 2002), increased intrinsic motivation (Armenakis, Harris, & Massholder, 1993; Locke & Latham, 1990; Yammarino & Naughton, 1992), and increased satisfaction in their performance (Smylie, Lazurus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996).

In contrast to participative leadership, directive leadership removed power from members of the organization and emphasized decisions that supported the leader's vision (Fiedler, 1989; Sagie, 1997; Stogdill, 1974). Directive leadership linked to defective decision making and poor team performance in schools (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Gaziel, 1998). Although researchers considered the leadership styles at opposite ends of a continuum (Lewis et al., 2002), meta-analyses of the literature concluded that both styles could improve worker productivity, depending on the situation. Wagner (1994) contended that, although the results were minimal, participative leadership resulted in positive worker attitudes and improved performance. In comparison, studies also concluded that leader direction had a positive impact on employee performance (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Murphy & Fiedler, 1992; Sagie, 1996).

A review of team literature suggested that teams with highly directive leaders performed at optimal rates and achieved at higher rates compared to other counterparts (Cruz et al., 1999; Kahai et al., 1997; Peterson, 1997; Sagie 1996). However, participative leadership fostered team innovation and improved the attitudes of members (De Dreu & West, 2001; O'Hara, 2001). Sagie (1996) measured performance and

autonomy, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), and correlates with an intrinsic desire for self-determination (Wilson & Coolican, 1996) and self-efficacy (Short et al., 1994).

Somech (2002) asserted that directive leaders could hone their teachers' performance through the motivational strategy of organizational commitment. Two processes could enhance directive leadership. First, the leader must develop a vision that included short- and long-term goals to improve the organization over time (Jung & Avolio, 1999). The leaders model their commitment by remaining consistent with school goals and initiatives and create an essential sense of evolving (Barrett, 1998). Furthermore, when behaviors are consistent with the goals in the mission and vision, teachers understand the importance of forsaking their personal interest in an effort to model those actions that are most consistent with the vision and mission (Goddard, 2001). Second, directive leaders clearly communicate the intricacies of how the vision will occur. They are explicit in how monitoring for the goals will take place and provide frequent updates regarding milestones. Predetermined standards can alleviate ambiguity and provide structure to create a link between effort and productivity (Eisenhardt & Tabrizi, 1995; Jelinek & Schoonhoven, 1990; Wheelwright & Clark, 1992). Locke and Latham (1990) established the goal-setting theory that suggested strong evidence (Drach-Zahavy & Erez, 2002) that specific goals articulated without ambiguity acclimated the individual to activities connected to goals and deterred them from partaking in those irrelevant to the goals.

Somech (2002) suggested that participative leadership created an environment that improved teacher performance through two motivational strategies, organizational

commitment and teacher empowerment. First, commitment served as a motivational factor that individuals associated with participation and emphasized self-control as a primary motivational factor (Erez, 1993). Participative leaders afforded teachers the experience of being involved and sharing their perspective in the decision-making processes. This created a commitment to implement decisions and increased the likelihood those decisions would continue when working with their students. As a result, active participation improved involvement and commitment. Individuals were more prone to trust, assumed higher levels of responsibility, and desired to grow professionally (Armenkais et al., 1993; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Fullan, 1997). Evers (1990) suggested that teachers' success and involvement were contingent upon the degree to which they were willing to take part in school activities and develop new initiatives rather than simply responding to programs objectives by others in the organization.

The manner in which members in an organization perceived empowerment largely determined the level of motivation in an organization (Marks & Louis, 1997; Rinehart & Short, 1994; Spreitzer, 1996). In many instances, the administrator's primary responsibilities were to plan, control, and articulate ways to achieve school improvement goals. However, in the participative process, teachers actively sought strategies for school improvement and shared responsibility in developing activities that addressed them (Terry, 1996). Moreover, participative leadership enabled teachers to be active participants in the decision-making process, thereby providing them with more autonomy (Wood & Bandura, 1989) and strengthening their professionalism (Firestone & Pennell, 1993), which were the fundamental components of empowerment. Furthermore, teachers who took an active role in decision making ensured that accurate information was

available during the process. Therefore, it served as a means of enhancing their self-efficacy and self-determination (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Management of Excellence

Research suggested that to change an organization effectively, it was imperative to remove any structural impediments (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). Researchers noted this task was far more important than providing new resources to an organization (Hall & Hord, 1987; Sarson, 1996). It was also necessary to adjust the school schedule, thereby enabling collaboration among all teachers (Raywid, 1994). Other impediments included not having set guidelines for linking activities between the school and community, lack of collaboration among teachers in similar disciplines, and formal decision making that appeared unjust to many in the organization. If there was unequal distribution of power, it could be a hindrance because it could focus more attention on social norms than on protocol (Starbuck, 1992). Size could be an additional obstacle to organizational growth because it could make it difficult to develop a true professional learning community (Lee & Smith, 1997).

For learning to be optimal, individuals must have a learning base and access to new information. Learning in school communities may come from the following sources: individual knowledge presented to stakeholders and research-based practices implemented at other schools. Stakeholders encompass parents, students, and community members and frequently disseminate information to them at meetings after school or outside of school. Research-based practices typically address student achievement concerns specific to that location (Krause, 1995).

Reasonable boundaries for knowledge acquisition should be available for community members. Additionally, members outside the school should feel comfortable in and connected to the school (Raywid, 1994). Most high schools have protocols for the dissemination of important information. However, that information can seem fragmented to individuals not associated directly with the schools (Krause & Louis, 1993). When schools operate efficiently and effectively, staff members could share information to promote entrepreneurship, which could decrease decentralization and make the community constantly aware of the goals related to the mission and vision (Starbuck, 1992).

Developing a capacity for organizational learning requires leaders open to less traditional models (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Fernandez, 1994; Murphy & Louis, 1994). Heifetz (1994) espoused that, in high-performing learning environments, leadership was less centralized and facilitated risk taking at all levels. While many view effective school leaders as the experts on instruction, leaders must foster an environment where teachers seek to enhance their professionalism. They must equip teachers with the tools to improve the issues of school reform. In public schools, the ultimate decision making rests with the central office. School boards, state agencies, and the term leadership without authority were particularly appropriate in those institutions (Heifetz, 1994).

Ironically, directive leadership was sometimes necessary for organizational learning (West, 2002). The organization must communicate goals in a manner that is meaningful to all members (Louis & Marks, 1999). Huberman and Miles (1984) asserted that pressure and support at the district level were critical to the implementation of new initiatives and to monitoring them. Byrk et al. (1996) noted that, while developing a

professional learning community demonstrated leadership, it could be somewhat authoritative.

Schools must be held accountable and be autonomous for organizational learning to occur (McLaughlin, Shepard, & O'Day, 1995; Rothman, 1995). If there is no consensus on predetermined benchmarks and rewards, the capacity for organizational learning will be lacking. However, if schools acknowledge responsibility collectively, there is greater likelihood that individuals will not abuse their autonomy, but will develop appropriate standards (Louis & Marks, 1999). Newnann, King, and Rigdon (1997) noted that schools with a strong organizational capacity develop rigorous standards for accountability. They also noted that, in settings where strong external accountability existed, the organizational capacity was weak.

Professionalism

Professional growth refers to the perceptions that the school in which teachers work provides them with opportunities to grow professionally and personally, learn continuously, and improve their skills. Empowered schools provide opportunities for staff members to display their competence (Short, 1992). When staff members initiate and carry out new ideas, they can offer enhanced learning opportunities to their students (Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Short & Greer, 1997). Empowered teachers have the opportunity and encouragement to provide input regarding important issues (Edwards et al., 2002). Empowered teachers also have the knowledge, responsibilities, and resources to make sound decisions and informed professional judgments (Little, 1982).

Glenn (1990) concluded that the concept of empowerment aligned with having a strong command of the subject matter and instructional practices. Maeroff (1988) contended that assisting teachers in becoming more knowledgeable about the field of education and enabling them to create a repertoire of techniques provided the foundation for empowering teachers. According to Firestone and Pennell (1993), attempting to personalize teachers strengthened teacher commitment and instruction by increasing their skill.

Self-efficacy refers to the way in which teachers perceive their ability to assist with student learning and their competence level in creating effective programs that bring about changes in student learning. According to Blasé (1982), the primary rewards in teaching resulted from the positive self-evaluations of student performance in academic, ethical, and counseling terms. Self-efficacy strengthened as individuals acquired self-knowledge, became competent, and mastered skills necessary to affect the desired outcomes. Rosenholtz (1989) noted a direct correlation between teacher self-efficacy and competency and their desire to remain in the profession. Additionally, there was a strong correlation between a teacher's self-efficacy, competency, and student achievement (Jung & Sosik, 2002).

Teaming

The conceptual frameworks for empowerment provide several assumptions. Based on the human nature perspective, individuals were generally capable of doing good work and had the desire to do well (Wallace, 1993). Each person has "an internal need for self-determination and a need to cope with environmental demands" (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 474). However, empowerment was specific to a particular context;

individuals empowered in one environment may not necessarily be empowered in another setting. Therefore, empowerment was not a universal construct that could be generalized to different situations and roles, but more so to the domains of work (Spreitzer, 1995).

Transitioning to a more empowering work environment required effective planning to enable individuals or groups to "act on their own behalf to achieve a greater measure of control over their lives and destinies" (Staples, 1990, p. 30). Transformations in school contexts might include changes in the delegation of power and require different and flexible structures of management that would decrease pressures for conformity existing in many traditional organizations (Belasco & Strayer, 1994; Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Lawler et al., 1992; Potterfield, 1999).

As self-managed teams become dominant organizational structures, members begin to assume the structural views of empowerment. Additionally, changes in work routines and restructuring of positions may cause stronger relationships and increased involvement in the decision-making process. Vertical hierarchies and mechanistic systems that promote passive action may also produce a flexible environment wherein authority figures are less formal (Courtright et al., 1989; Pennings & Woiceshyn, 1987) and there is an increase in professionalism and the freedom to function effectively.

Self-managed teams can develop a sense of collective power when individual members are confident in their abilities and the group is able to address concerns strategically. In appropriate conditions, schools develop as high-involvement organizations that empower teachers to exude professionalism (Blasé & Blasé, 2001).

A review of literature on teamwork (Buckley, 2000; Donaldson & Sanderson, 1996; Ellis & Fouts, 1994; Maeroff, 1993) recognized four primary teamwork functions:

a) team teaching, b) curriculum development, c) school governance/administration, and d) school-community relations. Team teaching involves small groups of teachers that collaborate to enhance teaching/learning environments. Many of the teams emerge through interpersonal interactions as opposed to administrative directives (Donaldson & Sanderson, 1996). Teams that developed spontaneously exhibited high levels of trust, openness in communication, and aptitude for taking risks without fear of punitive consequences (Donnellon, 1996).

Curriculum development teams study and revise instructional material and practices. Their purpose is to strategize; they closely examine new textbooks and determine if they relate to the school's mission. Teachers' roles are critical because they make decisions that directly involve how their students are best able to learn. School governance teams examine and develop budgets, develop curricular goals, and create long-term plans for the school. Collaborative school governance distributes policy-making duties and responsibilities among principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders. Members may develop some type of ownership and teachers feel more inclined to play a critical role in developing and implementing policies and procedures (Humphrey, 1987).

Community relations teamwork typically occurs outside the school administration. This type of teamwork links connections between the school and the community. Teachers form close partnerships with parent associations and neighborhood organizations. The relationships promote autonomy and afford the groups the flexibility to explore issues and concerns they might not address in the traditional school structure (Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2003).

The term culture to describe the life inside of schools began with Waller (1932). He emphasized that schools had their own identity, which encompassed complex relationships, moral codes, and mores. Over time, culture research emphasized the origin of shared beliefs, yielding a wide range of definitions. While there is no universal definition for school culture, there are several commonly accepted definitions. "School culture is the lens through which participants view themselves and the world" (Hargreaves, 1995). According to Maslowski (2001), school culture is "the basic assumptions, norms, values, and cultural artifacts that are shared by school members, which influence their functioning at school" (p. 7). Stoll (1999) asserted, "School culture manifests itself in rituals, customs, stories, ways of treating each other, and culture's artifacts such as language" (p. 74). Society and communities influence school culture, and each school has a unique culture; however, certain cultures are more conducive for teacher and student growth than are others. School culture is comprised of

> unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and their students. (Deal & Peterson, 1999, pp. 2-3)

School culture encompasses not only how individual members perceive themselves, but also how they perceive those around them.

Schoen and Teddlie (2008) espoused school culture was a context specific branch of organizational culture and that the accepted organizational theory of Schein could explain the research on culture in educational organizations. Schein (1992) provided an operational definition of culture as a,

Empowerment and School Culture

Matthes (1986) cited self-worth, efficacy, and empowerment as keys to effective schools. According to Glickman (1991), "The movement to improve schools through empowerment may be the last chance in many of our lifetimes to make schools institutions that are worthy of confidence and professional respect" (p. 69). Several researchers suggested that highly empowered teachers were more likely to be highly motivated, which positively affected student achievement and improved the culture of a school (Pickle, 1991). Park (1988) reported significant relationships between job satisfaction and teacher control, control over methods, domains of teacher empowerment, and influence in school policy. Wunder (1997) noted that teacher empowerment, teacher efficacy, and teacher morale closely linked to teacher attendance, which had an impact on student achievement.

Most schools promoted collaboration as a means of effective communication and a key tool for transforming low-performing schools. Teachers became less isolated and their schools evolved into learning organizations (Fullan, 1993). While many administrators were typically instrumental in these transformations, teachers became active participants in the decision-making process and developed effective relationships outside of school. As the dynamics of the school culture changed, individuals were more apt to share their experiences and learn from one another (Kytle & Bogotch, 2000). Additionally, schools became a collective learning community and involved all stakeholders: teachers, students, parents, and community members (Calvert et al., 1994; Garavan, 1997).

> pattern of basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to the problems. (p. 12)

Every culture develops unique practices to address various issues and concerns, and those practices and behaviors reflect what the culture considers most important. Schein's (1985, 1992) organizational culture had three interrelated levels, artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions. Each level was an essential component of the framework for school effectiveness. Artifacts consisted primarily of symbolic representations and observations, and interviews were the appropriate research methods to obtain this information. It was the most tangible and visible of the three levels. "Myths for instance articulate which events in the past have been important for members of the organization and are rendered in stories that are frequently called upon" (Maslowski, 2006, p. 35). Artifacts also included the practices of members within the organization.

The second level, espoused beliefs, involved the perceptions of participants within a school and data from psychometric methods used to survey beliefs and attitudes of participants. Values constituted what individuals considered correct and incorrect or desirable and undesirable. They reflected what was most important to the organization. The values of an organization often translated into norms and guided the ways in which others governed themselves. The fundamental level of Schein's organizational culture included basic assumptions, which represented a set of understandings about the most appropriate manner in which to handle situations and problems that could arise in an

organization. According to Schein (1985, 1992), basic assumptions were often taken for granted to the extent that members within an organization disregarded and could not articulate them. Assumptions depicted the deepest level because they reflected the basic questions people faced, the beliefs that staff members held as true, and the nature of human relationships. Basic assumptions were also unconscious and intangible. Underlying assumptions, values, and norms strongly influence the behavioral patterns of the organization (Dumay, 2009).

Maslowski (2006) identified three aspects of culture as content, homogeneity, and strength. Content described the meaning of basic assumptions, norms, and values shared by organizational members. A high score indicated that members of an organization held a particular area, such as student achievement or parental involvement, in high regard and a low score indicated that individuals considered an aspect to be a lower priority. The second level, homogeneity, referred to the extent to which members shared basic assumptions, norms, values, and cultural artifacts. A culture was perfectly homogeneous if all staff members ascribed to similar assumptions, norms, and values. The third element was the strength of the culture, which referred to the extent that assumptions, values, norms, and artifacts influenced members in the organization. Cultural strength was the normative pressure placed on organizational members to behave in a certain manner, operationalized as the "interaction between cultural values and homogeneity" (Dumay, 2009, p. 526).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) suggested that the relationship between student achievement and leadership closely linked to school conditions, including purposes and goals, school structure, people, and school culture. When addressing concerns regarding

school improvement, evidence suggested that it was imperative to examine the culture of a school. Halsall (1998) stated, "One of the most consistent messages from the school improvement literature is that school culture has a powerful impact on the change effort" (p. 29). Hopkins (1995) asserted "unless we address the issue of school culture . . . there is little chance that school improvement will be achieved" (p. 85). In order to change school culture, all members must be aware of new ideas and beliefs. Members must be willing to view certain practices and concepts from an entirely different perspective. While the school leader is responsible for establishing the culture and pushing it in a particular direction, there are limits. Effective school leaders involve all participants directly and indirectly associated with the building, including pupils, teachers, and parents (Firestone & Louis, 1999).

Many of the values and customs shared by individuals within a school have a very strong influence on learning, teacher productivity, and well-being (Rosenholtz, 1989). Fullan (2001) and Deal and Peterson (1998) identified the following common features of positive school cultures: a) goal oriented or the extent to which team members share a school vision that has been formulated with clarity, b) participative decision making or the extent to which faculty members participated in shared decision making, c) innovativeness or the extent to which teachers are flexible and their perceptions adapting to change, d) leadership or the perceptions of teachers regarding their perceptions of the principal providing a structured and supportive environment, and e) cooperation among teachers or the level of formal and informal relationships.

Little (1982) claimed that norms, interaction, and continuous improvement differentiated successful schools from less successful schools. The researcher offered

four critical practices of adaptability: teacher talk or "frequent, continuous and increasingly concrete talk about teaching practice" (p. 3), joint planning, teacher observation, and teacher teaching. Fullan (1982, 1991) asserted releasing teachers from isolation enhanced teacher collegiality and was essential for enduring educational change. According to Goodard (1987), the culture of most schools encouraged teachers to handle conflict independently, but that they must work together to change the school culture. Collaboration does not always happen naturally; it takes time, trust and an earnest effort from both the teachers and the principal to fulfill the school's mission. It fosters school improvement and professional growth and benefits several members of the school community, thereby positively influencing a school's culture.

In the area of school culture, principals strive towards creating an environment wherein teachers feel empowered to work collaboratively and professionally. Principals can also group teachers in such a manner to utilize their resources most effectively. Principals can use activities, such as faculty meetings and staff development, to foster collegiality (Edwards et al., 2002). Principals play a vital role in teacher empowerment and, in many cases, they serve as a coach (Deal & Patterson, 1999). They have the ability to set the norms for the school. Valente (1999) found that, when principals developed collegial relationships with teachers, listened to their concerns, communicated openly, had confidence in their abilities, and shared effective instructional strategies, teachers became empowered. As teachers became empowered, their relationships with the principal improved, undoubtedly improving the overall culture of the school.

There is a strong correlation between personal empowerment and learner-centered attitudes towards students. Teachers with learner-centered attitudes are in situations

communication and effectively handling conflicts as paramount to a positive school climate.

In schools with a positive climate, it was common to identify self-managing teams. According to Hackman (1986), individuals in these groups accepted responsibility, constantly monitored resources, and were intrinsically motivated to do what was best for the organization. Lawler (1986) noted that training in skill and competency training in interpersonal relationships were fundamental for members of self-managing teams to work successfully.

Several researchers showed interest in the role of leaders in self-managing teams. Many studies found that leadership played an equally vital role in self-managing teams as it did in those organizations with a traditional structure (Hackman, 1986; Lawler, 1986; Manz & Sims, 1987). Manz and Sims (1987) described leaders in an organization with self-managing work groups as an "unleader [or] one who leads others to lead themselves" (p. 411). Hackman (1986) noted that "leadership is both more important and a more demanding undertaking in self-managing units than in traditional organizations" (p. 119). These findings confirmed facilitative leadership as most appropriate to a climate that could empower teachers.

Organizational climate is a multidimensional concept, evolving from organizational research to respond to the growing need for clarity. Since the 1950s, organizational research emphasized the influence of organizational features on personal behavior of members within the organization (Schneider & Barlett, 1968). Consequently, many researchers struggled with analyzing and conceptualizing the complex term organizational climate. James and Jones (1974) determined the definition of

as managerial techniques and conducted psychological research on classroom learning environments linking student perceptions of classroom conditions to achievement (e.g. Fraser, 1991; Houtveen, Vermeulen, & Van de Grift, 1993; Wubbels, Brekelmans, & Hooymayers, 1991).

Hoy et al. (1991) suggested using metaphors like healthy and unhealthy to describe climate. Fairman and Clark (1983) stated that healthy schools exhibited the following types of cultures essential to organizational health: goal focus, communication, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation, and problem-solving adequacy. According to Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1991), unhealthy schools lacked strong leadership and had teachers dissatisfied with their jobs and colleagues. Additionally, neither teachers nor students were highly motivated and academic achievement was not a priority. Healthy schools promoted high expectations for teachers and students, effective leadership, and collegiality, which were conducive to student achievement. The Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth Alliance Organizing Project (2001) found that most researchers of climate included the words caring and safety in their descriptions of schools with a healthy climate. They further described a healthy school climate as a safe and orderly environment wherein individuals felt like valued family members, empowered to pursue the school's mission. The Western Alliance for the Study of School Climate (WASSC) contended that school climate comprised physical and social environmental elements: physical appearance of the facility, faculty interaction, student relations, leadership/decision making; disciplined environment; an environment conducive for learning; and relationships between the school and community. In *Best Practice Briefs*,

Tableman (2004) emphasized a comprehensive view to define school climate reflecting the four aspects of school environment: a) a physical environment that is warm and promotes student achievement; b) a social environment that promotes healthy and effective communication among faculty, students, parents, and community members; c) an affective environment conducive to a sense of belonging and self-esteem; and d) an academic environment that promotes self-fulfillment and high expectations for learning.

The majority of studies on school climate focused primarily on teacher and leader-teacher relationships and other issues related to job satisfaction. Miller (1993) stated it was uncommon to find research on school climate related to student achievement. Wang et al. (1997) conducted a meta-analysis found that school climate was one of the top influences affecting school achievement. Slowly, the emphasis on school climate shifted from management orientation to student learning (Sergiovanni, 1991). Deal and Peterson (1999) noted several studies confirming improvements in student achievement based on positive school climates. Highly motivated teachers have greater success with student performance. Since principals directly affected the school climate (Hoy et al., 1990, 2006; Maslowski, 2001), they should evaluate the characteristics of school climate that affect student achievement.

Rhinehart and Short (1994) asserted that the level of teacher empowerment related to their perceptions of school climate. There was a correlation between school climate and teacher empowerment. In schools where teachers perceived the school climate as poor, many teachers did not display high levels of empowerment. However, teachers with a more positive perception of their school climate were more likely to display a high level of empowerment. Additionally, schools that were restructuring had

high levels of teacher empowerment when faculty members served as active members in the decision-making process compared to teachers who were not able to assume an active role.

Additionally, teachers with a greater sense of empowerment displayed a higher level of commitment to the organization. They appeared more competent in addressing and identifying problems. Furthermore, they were change agents and instrumental in organizing and implementing new procedures (Crow & Pounder, 2000). Empowered teachers assumed responsibility for identifying solutions. As a result, they created an environment that fostered open evaluation with constructive criticism. According to Lawler (1986), teachers who serve on self-managing teams assume the roles of evaluator, monitor, rewarder, and manager. Teachers become owners of their environment and improve deficiencies in instruction and student work, thereby promoting a climate that is centered around student achievement.

Chapter III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses the methodology used in the study. It contains five sections: study purpose and research questions, selection of study participants, research instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a brief chapter summary.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the SCS, and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida. The following research questions (RQ), with accompanying hypotheses (H), guided the study.

RQ1: Does the SCS evidence a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low and high performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS evidences no statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS evidences a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

RQ2: Does the SCS reveal correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS reveals no correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS reveals a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho 2: The SCS reveals a negative correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Selection of Study Participants

Elementary schools with a history of either low or high performance on selected measures of state assessments provided a sample to include in the study. This section of the chapter details the state assessment systems used in Georgia and Florida and outlines the process for selecting schools for inclusion in the study based on their performance on these measures .

Georgia State Assessment System

The Georgia Department of Education requires the administration of the CRCT to students in grades one through eight. Assessment of students in grades one through three is in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Reading. Students in grades three through eight also test in these areas with the addition of Social Studies and Science. Due to

budget constraints, the state did not administer the CRCT to grades one and two in 2011. The CRCT assesses the content standards outlined in the Georgia Performance Standards.

Student performance on the CRCT is a scale score ranked as exceeding, meeting, or not meeting state standards. If students score above 850, they exceed the standards in that subject area. If the students' scale score is between 800-849, they meet the standards in that subject area. The state considers scores below 800 as not meeting standards.

The measure of school performance is by the percentage of students that meet or exceed the CRCT standards outlined by the state. This passing percentage is the school's Annual Measureable Objective (AMO) for Mathematics. The researcher and cohort members examined the state AMOs on the CRCT in Mathematics for three school years—2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011—to obtain a three-year average on which to base the selection of low-performing and high-performing schools for selection in the study.

Table 1 lists the AMO in Mathematics which revealed much greater year-to-year variability with significant annual increases in pass rates over the three-year period. This pattern of increased variability in Mathematics AMOs led to the school choices. The measure of student achievement as a review of the performance of schools would be accessible and showed a similar pattern of performance.

Table 1

Annual Measureable Objectives in Mathematics for Georgia for 2008-2009 through 2010-2011

AMO Subjects	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	3-Year Average
Mathematics	59.5%	67.6%	75.7%	67.6%

Based on the state average AMO for the past three years, low-performing schools were those with a three-year average math pass rate of 72% or below and high-performing schools were those with a three-year math pass rates of 80% or higher. The average Mathematics AMOs for each of the selected low-performing and high-performing Georgia schools in the study were as follows: GAE Lo 1–72%, GAE Lo 2–62% and GAE Hi–91%.

Florida State Assessment System

The Florida Department of Education established a system of school grading based on student performance on the FCAT. Since 1999, schools received letter grade ratings from "A" to "F" based on the calculation of factors related to student performance on the FCAT. Schools that received a grade of "A" earned 525 or more points, while the lowest performing students made adequate progress in reading and math and tested at least 95% of eligible students. Schools that received a grade of "B" earned between 494 and 524 points, and the lowest-performing students made adequate progress in reading or math within two years and tested at least 90% of eligible students. Schools that received a grade of "C" earned between 435 to 494 points, and the lowest-performing students made adequate progress within two years and tested at least 90% of eligible students. Schools that received a grade of "D" earned between 395 to 434 points and tested 90% of eligible students. Schools that received a grade of "F" earned fewer than 395 points. In Florida, schools earning a grade of "A" or "B" were classified as high-performing schools, and those earning a "D" or "F" were classified as low-performing.

While Florida's system of school grading to distinguish high-performing and low-performing schools is distinct from Georgia's accountability system, Florida also

recognizes pass rates on state assessment exams as a measure of school success. The FCAT scoring process recognizes five levels of achievement with accompanying scaled scores for each level. The minimum level for passing the FCAT is Level 3.

Table 2

Achievement Levels on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT)

FCAT Achievement Levels	
Level 5	This student has success with the most challenging content of the *Sunshine State Standards*. A student scoring in Level 5 answers most of the test questions correctly, including the most challenging questions.
Level 4	This student has success with the challenging content of the *Sunshine State Standards*. A student scoring in Level 4 answers most of the test questions correctly, but may have only some success with questions that reflect the most challenging content.
Level 3	This student has partial success with the challenging content of the *Sunshine State Standards*, but performance is inconsistent. A student scoring in Level 3 answers many of the test questions correctly but is generally less successful with questions that are the most challenging.
Level 2	This student has limited success with the challenging content of the *Sunshine State Standards*.
Level 1	This student has little success with the challenging content of the *Sunshine State Standards*.

FCAT Mathematics Scale Scores					
Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
3	100 - 252	253 - 293	294 - 345	346 - 397	398 - 500
4	100 - 259	260 - 297	298 - 346	347 - 393	394 - 500
5	100 - 287	288 - 325	326 - 354	355 - 394	395 - 500
6	100 - 282	283 - 314	315 - 353	354 - 390	391 - 500
7	100 - 274	275 - 305	306 - 343	344 - 378	379 - 500
8	100 - 279	280 - 309	310 - 346	347 - 370	371 - 500
9	100 - 260	261 - 295	296 - 331	332 - 366	367 - 500
10	100 - 286	287 - 314	315 - 339	340 - 374	375 - 500

Table 2 shows each of the levels and the accompanying scale scores for each grade level. For the purposes of this study, the low-performing schools in Florida were those with 72% or fewer students scoring at Level 3 in Mathematics. High-performing schools were

those with 80% or more students scoring at Level 3 in math. The math pass rates for the Florida schools selected for this study were as follows: FLE Hi 1–85%, FLE Hi 2–82%, and FLE Lo 1–70%.

Selection of Participating Schools

The researcher is a part of a doctoral cohort in the Educational Leadership program at Valdosta State University. Two other cohort students offered their assistance in gaining access to elementary schools in Florida and South Georgia that met the criteria for low-performing and high-performing. The researcher provided each cohort member with a list of high-performing and low-performing schools in their respective school districts and in neighboring districts. This led to securing six schools (three in Georgia and three in Florida) that met the selection criteria.

Three schools from Florida participated in the study—one low-performing and two high-performing. The one high performing school was in a district in southeast Florida. The school was the cohort student's place of employment. The researcher's major professor connected her with a doctoral student at a Florida institution who was using the same survey instrument in her dissertation and obtained permission for the researcher to use information for the second low-performing school.

Three schools from Georgia participated in the study—two low- performing and one high-performing. The second VSU doctoral cohort student enlisted the one high-performing school. The two remaining schools agreed to participate through phone inquiries requesting permission to conduct surveys at the schools. All schools were located in two small rural districts in South Georgia.

Additional description of methods used to collect data at the respective schools is in the Data Collection section of this chapter.

Research Instrumentation

Researchers developed the SCS as a tool to assist school leaders in determining whether the school structure was effectively attaining high performance. The framework of the 50-item survey is around a travel metaphor in which survey participants consider the current conditions within their school that correspond to each survey item, and rate the item on a continuum from 1 (Below Expectation) to 5 (Above Expectation). The first 42-items are in this format and participants rate each item on a five-point Likert scale. The final eight questions are the "Report Card" section of the survey and consist of one sentence statements about the school that participants rate using the same Likert scale.

The 50 items of SCS reflect ten themes related to effective schools: collaborative decision-making, concern for school/stakeholders, continual school improvement focus, empowerment, human (needs) resources, intent/direction, leadership, management of excellence, professionalism, and teaming. The theme of empowerment was the focus of this research and the 11 SCS items related to this theme were the focus of data analysis.

Originally, administration of the SCS used a paper and pencil format, but the instrument migrated to an electronic format administered online through a password-protected Web site (www.instrumentalsurveys.com/rssi). In this format, each survey participant has a unique user name and password generated by the SCS administrator. The individual access codes go to all persons taking the survey. The codes for administrators have an additional unique identifier, which allows them to compare their responses for similarities and differences with other members of their administrative team

and with the faculty as a whole. The nature of the questions on the survey limits its use to school administrators and other instructional personnel that have direct knowledge of the organizational structures within the school that either enhance or diminish the school's overall effectiveness.

Maintaining Study Subject Confidentiality

As noted in the Data Collection section of this chapter, the researcher took care to ensure the confidentiality of the districts, schools, and individual teachers and administrators who took part in this study. A component of the confidentiality was the use of codes to mask the identity of the schools and districts in the study. Table 3 displays the identity masking system used and the codes that correspond to districts and schools. Throughout the remaining chapters, these codes refer to the schools and districts that were part of this study.

Table 3

Masking Identity Codes for Georgia and Florida Schools and School Districts

States	Districts	Schools
South Georgia	SGD 1 SGD 2	
Florida	FD 1 FD 2 FD 3	
Georgia Low-Performing Schools		GAE Lo 1 GAE Lo 2
Georgia High-Performing Schools		GAE Hi 1
Florida Low-Performing Schools		FLE Lo 1
Florida High-Performing Schools		FLE Hi 1 FLE Hi 2

Data Collection

Once the researcher obtained approval to conduct surveys at each of the six schools, she and her cohort members called each school principal to explain the study purpose, research design, and the advantages of administering the SCS. The parties reached an agreed upon date and time for the administration of the survey. The researcher contacted the SCS survey administrator to give them the number of administrators and teachers at each of the six schools and the administrator generated a sufficient number of user names and passwords to allow all participants to take the survey. The researcher received the access codes and emailed them to the school principals, along with a presentation that explained the procedures for administering the survey, including the link and directions for logging on to the Web site and completing the survey. The researcher then called each principal to address any questions and to agree a time for teachers to complete the survey. The maximum time allotted was ten days, but two principals requested shorter windows of time to encourage teachers to complete the survey quickly.

At each school, teachers signed a confidentiality statement, noting no punitive measures because of their participation. It was most feasible to assemble all teachers into the computer lab and complete the SCS in one session. Teachers had 50 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete all items on the SCS. All six schools completed the survey within a ten-day window.

Data Analysis

A *t* test determined whether statistically significant differences existed in the levels of teacher empowerment at the low-perfoming and high-performing schools. A

Pearson correlation test determined if there was a relationship between the level of teacher empowerment at each school and school performance.

The *t* test commonly assesses the difference between the means of two similar groups and determines if there is a significant difference (Slavin, 1992). A value of *p* is indicative of random sampling errors between the two means. If the two means are statistically significant, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis, and the value of *p* is equal to or less than .05 (Holcomb, 2004).

The SCS researcher used a *t* test to compare the average quality points score on the SCS to determine differences in the levels of teacher empowerment in low-performing and high-performing schools and if those differences were statistically significant. The average quality point scores for each group of schools was conducted on the *t* test analysis. The analysis results in a score called a *p*-value. The level of the *p*-value for the t-test was.05, signaling that differences in the average quality point scores were statistically significant. In addition to the set point of .05, the typical range of *p*-values is as follows:

- 0.2 - extremely insignificant
- 0.1- somewhat insignificant
- 0.05 - significant
- 0.02 -somewhat significant
- 0.01- very significant.

A *p*-value of 0.05 or lower would result in rejecting the null hypothesis proposed in Research Question 1.

The researcher also ran a Pearson's r correlation to determine the relationship between the levels of teacher empowerment and school performance in low-performing and high-performing elementary schools. From this data, the researcher compared the average quality points of each school to the performance on the mathematics portion of the CRCT and FCAT.

Correlation measures the relationship between two or more variables and values range from -1.00 to +1.00. A perfect *negative* correlation is -1.00 and a perfect *positive* correlation is +1.00. The Pearson r measures the extent to which two variables are proportional to one another; it also assumes both variables as measured on an interval scale. A linear relationship between two variables is r. When the correlation variable is squared (r^2), it represent the proportion of common variation (strength and magnitude) between the variables measured. Significance, strength, and magnitude evaluate the correlation between variables (Salkin, 2000). In this study, the researcher determined the strength of the relationship between teacher empowerment as measured by the average point score on the SCS and school performance as measured by the mathematics pass rate scores on the CRCT and FCAT.

Chapter Summary

The research methodology for this study focused on determining whether there was a difference in the levels of teacher empowerment at selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida, and if those differences were statistically significant. It also focused on determining a relationship between levels of teacher empowerment and school performance. The data collected for

analysis derived from teacher and administrator responses on the SCS from six low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to improve school performance, incorporating strategies to improve teacher empowerment has become a contemporary trend in education (Short & Johnson, 2003). Researchers concluded those individuals most directly involved in teaching should participate in shared decision-making related to instruction (Karsten et al., 2000). However, little research offered specific areas of teacher empowerment linked to school performance.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the SCS, and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida. The following research questions, with accompanying hypotheses, guided the study.

RQ1: Does the SCS evidence a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS evidences no statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS evidences a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

RQ2: Does the SCS reveal correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low- performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS reveals no correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS reveals a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho2: The SCS reveals a negative correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

The researcher administered the School Culture Survey to elementary school teachers in South Georgia and Florida and examined overall school performance. The measurement of school performance was on the math pass percentage scores on CRCT and FCAT from the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years.

Study Subjects

Participating schools were in South Georgia and Florida school districts. Selection of the six elementary schools was due to convenience and access, after they met the established criteria of classification as high or low performing. Three schools were

selected from South Georgia and three schools were from Florida. To ensure leadership continuity, the principals of each of the schools selected served in the current leadership role during the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years.

Teachers and administrators completed the 50-item SCS via computer. Before administration of the survey, teachers and administrators were informed that no punitive measures were associated with completion. Each participant received a user name, password, and directions. Teachers and administrators had 50 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete the 50-item survey.

School Culture Survey Results in the Low-Performing Schools

Table 4 lists the Average Quality Point Scores on each item of the SCS related to the theme of empowerment for each low-performing elementary school.

Table 4

Average Quality Point Scores for Each Empowerment Item on the School Culture Survey in Low-Performing Elementary Schools

SCS Teacher Empowerment Items	GAE Lo 1	GAE Lo 2	FLE Lo 1	SD
Leadership resides in teams, with everyone taking leadership responsibilities, from the bottom-up. (Item 1)	67	63	62	2.2
Delegates to others. The sharing of responsibility is promoted and employees are empowered to act. (Item 6)	58	65	60	2.9
Team members give feedback to the Principal and Leadership Team on their performance. (Item 8)	65	59	60	2.6
Resources are distributed to each team member based on a fair, equitable formula that is transparent, public, and understood. (Item 10)	66	72	66	2.8
Decisions are decentralized, with the vast majority of decisions being pushed down in the organization. (Item 20)	58	66	57	4.0
School's organizational design encourages employees to take immediate and appropriate action when needed. (Item 26)	63	68	64	2.2
Everyone participates in everything. (Item 29)	57	63	57	2.8
Everyone participates in the creation and implementation of the School's Strategic School Improvement Plan. (Item 30)	63	60	63	1.4

An organization that balances job responsibility with authority. (Item 35)	61	63	61	0.9
Are team members given the necessary information, resources, and decision-making authority needed to do quality work at your school? (Item 44)	67	69	62	2.9
Does the leadership at your school effectively empower teachers and staff with real power? (Item 45)	59	69	63	4.1
Average Quality Point Scores/Standard Deviation for CSC Teacher Empowerment Items	62	65	61	2.6

In low-performing schools, as shown in Table 4, Item 29–*Everyone participates in everything*, and Item 35–*An organization balances job responsibility with authority*, had the narrowest standard deviation, 1.4 and 2.9, respectively; the responses to these items had the least amount of variation. GAE Lo 2 scored slightly higher on Items 30 and 35 and slightly higher than GAE Lo 1 and FLE Lo 2. Item 20–*Decisions are decentralized with the vast majority of decisions being pushed down in the organization* and Item 45–*The leadership at your school effectively empowers teachers and staff with real power* had the highest standard deviation or the greatest amount of variation in responses. On Item 20, GAE Lo 2 scored significantly higher compared to GAE Lo 1 and FLE Lo 1. GAE Lo 2 scored significantly higher than GAE Lo 1 and slightly higher than FLE Lo 2 on Item 45.

SCS Results in the High-Performing Schools

Table 5 shows the SCS Empowerment Item responses in the high-performing elementary schools. GAE Hi 1, FLE Hi 1, and FLE Hi 2 had similar scores for Item 10–*Resources are distributed to each team member based on a fair, equitable formula that is transparent, public, and understood*; however, on Item 29–*Everyone participates in everything*, the schools had much more variability with FLE Hi 1 scoring highest, GAE

Hi 1 scoring lowest, and FLE Hi 2 falling in the midrange. Item 1–*Leadership resides in teams, with everyone taking leadership responsibilities, from the bottom-up* and Item 45–*The leadership at your school empowers teachers and staff with real power* had the widest standard deviation, 13.0 and 11.0, respectively. FLE Hi 2 scored significantly higher on Items 1 and 4 compared to GAE Hi 1 and FLE Hi 2. Overall, the three high-performing schools had much larger variability in responses (as reflected in the larger standard deviations) than did the low-performing schools.

Table 5

Average Quality Point Scores for Each Empowerment Item on the School Culture Survey in High-Performing Elementary Schools

SCS Teacher Empowerment Items	GAE Hi 1	FLE Hi 1	FLE Hi 2	SD
Leadership resides in teams, with everyone taking leadership responsibilities, from the bottom up. (Item 1)	64	88	56	13.6
Delegates to others. The sharing of responsibility is promoted and employees are empowered to act. (Item 6)	75	77	61	7.1
Team members give feedback to the Principal and Leadership Team on their performance. (Item 8)	67	83	62	9.0
Resources are distributed to each team member based on a fair, equitable formula that is transparent, public, and understood. (Item 10)	72	76	73	1.7
Decisions are decentralized, with the vast majority of decisions being pushed down in the organization. (Item 20)	65	73	55	7.4
School's organizational design encourages employees to take immediate and appropriate action when needed. (Item 26)	73	83	64	7.8
Everyone participates in everything. (Item 29)	71	76	60	6.7
Everyone participates in the creation and implementation of the School's Strategic School Improvement Plan. (Item 30)	74	82	63	7.8
An organization that balances job responsibility with authority. (Item 35)	75	84	62	9.0
Are team members given the necessary information, resources, and decision-making authority needed to do quality work at	75	89	67	9.1

your school? (Item 44)				
Does the leadership at your school effectively empower teachers and staff with real power? (Item 45)	74	87	60	11.0
Average Quality Point Scores/Standard Deviation for SCS Teacher Empowerment Items	71	82	62	8.2

Comparison of Average Quality Point Scores on the SCS Teacher Empowerment Items in Low and High-Performing Elementary Schools

After comparing the within-group differences and similarities of empowerment scores on the SCS, the average quality point scores were compared across the low-performing and high-performing elementary schools. Table 6 shows the comparisons with low-performing schools identified as Group 1 and high-performing schools identified as Group 2.

Table 6

Comparison of the Average Quality Points of Each Element of Teacher Empowerment Between Low-Performing and High-Performing Elementary Schools

SCS Item No.	Group 1 (Low-Performing Schools)			Average Quality Points for Group 1	Group 2 (High-Performing Schools)			Average Quality Points for Group 2
	GAE Lo 1	GAE Lo 2	FLA Lo 1		GAE Hi 1	FLA Hi 1	FLA Hi 2	
Item # 1	67	63	62	64.00	64	56	88	69.33
Item # 6	58	65	60	61.00	75	61	77	71.00
Item # 8	65	59	60	61.33	67	62	83	70.66
Item # 10	66	72	66	68.00	72	73	76	73.66
Item # 20	58	66	57	60.33	65	55	73	64.33
Item # 26	63	68	64	65.00	73	64	83	73.33
Item # 29	57	63	57	59.00	71	60	76	69.00
Item # 30	63	68	63	64.67	74	63	82	73.00
Item # 35	61	63	61	61.67	75	62	84	73.66
Item# 44	67	69	62	66.00	75	67	89	77.00
Item # 45	59	69	63	63.67	74	60	87	73.66

In both low-performing and high-performing schools, Item 44–*Team members are given the necessary information, resources and decision-making authority needed to do quality work at their school* was the strongest teacher empowerment element. Teachers reported that their schools offered accessible materials for instructional use and clearly communicated allocation procedures to faculty and other stakeholders in a consistent and efficient manner. In each of the schools, teachers noted encouragement and opportunities to make their own decisions pertaining to instruction. Further, teachers had appropriate resources to make sound decisions to produce optimal results.

In both low-performing and high-performing schools, Item 20–*Decisions are decentralized, with the vast majority of decisions being pushed down in the organization* and Item 29–*Everyone participates in everything* were the weakest teacher empowerment elements. While teachers perceived some autonomy over their instructional practices, others noted insufficient opportunities to have a true voice in school wide decision making. Because some noted administrators did not take their feedback seriously, they desired more collaboration and shared decision making with school leaders. They perceived administrators as using their authority as directive leadership as opposed to participative leadership. Additionally, teachers in each school perceived that opportunities for growth were available only to a select group of staff members rather than to the entire school.

Findings for Research Question 1

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the SCS, and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary

schools in South Georgia and Florida. The research question, hypothesis, and null hypothesis posed to address this issue were as follows:

RQ1: Does the SCS evidence a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS evidences no statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS evidences a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

To answer the question and test the hypotheses, the researcher conducted a *t* test of statistical significance. *T* tests are a statistical examination of the means of two populations or samples of populations. A two-sample *t* test examines whether two samples are different and the test is common when the variances of two normal distributions are unknown and when an experiment uses a small sample size. The *t* test examines the *t* statistic, *t* distribution and degrees of freedom to determine a *p*-value (probability) to determine whether the population/sample means differ.

The range of a *p*-value in a *t* test falls between 0 and 1. The *p*-value explains the probability of difference in data that may occur in sampling error. A *p*-value of less than .01 indicates rejecting the null hypothesis, while a *p*-value greater than .01 indicates accepting the null hypothesis. The following is a range of *p*-values for the two-sample *t*

test with 0.2- extremely insignificant; 0.1 somewhat insignificant; 0.05-significant; 0.02-somewhat significant; 0.01 - very significant.

The researcher conducted a two-sample *t* test for statistical significance with a resulting *p*-value less than 0.0001. The Web site http://www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/ttest1.cfm calculated the *p*-value. The formula for calculating t-tests is as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)s^2_1 + (n_2 - 1)s^2_2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}\left[\frac{n_1 + n_2}{n_1 n_2}\right]}}$$

Wherein,

$\bar{X}_1$ is the mean for Group 1.

$\bar{X}_2$ is the mean for Group 2.

n_1 is the number of people in Group 1.

n_2 is the number of people in Group 2.

s^2_1 is the variance for Group 1.

s^2_2 is the variance for Group 2

The resulting calculations are in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Comparison of Analysis of Teacher Empowerment Average Scores for High-Performing and Low- Performing Elementary Schools

Group	Group One	Group Two
Mean	63.1518	72.5727
SD	2.7142	3.8626
SEM	0.8184	1.1646
N	11	11

Note: *Standard Error of Measurement

The results of the paired two-sample *t* test indicated there were differences in the quality of teacher empowerment at the two groups of low-performing and high-performing schools, Group 1 and 2 respectively, and these differences were statistically significant. The *p*-value was less than 0.0001, indicating a highly significant difference in the two sample populations and subsequent rejection of the null hypothesis.

Findings for Research Question 2

The study determined whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as measured by the SCS and school performance in selected South Georgia and Florida elementary schools as measured by math pass rates on the FCAT and CRCT. The second research question and hypotheses reflected these measurements, as follows:

RQ2: Does the SCS reveal correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS reveals no correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS reveals a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho2: The SCS reveals a negative correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

The researcher conducted a Pearson's r correlation to determine the relationship and strength between the levels of teacher empowerment and math pass rates on the CRCT and FCAT in low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools. From this data, the researcher compared the average quality points of each school to its performance on the mathematics portion of the CRCT and FCAT.

Correlation describes the measure of a relationship between two or more variables with the values ranging from -1.00 to +1.00. When a perfect *negative* value exists, the representation is by -1.00, and if a perfect *positive* value exists, the representation is by +1.00. The Pearson r measures the extent to which two variables are proportional to one another; it also assumes both variables as measured on an interval scale. A linear relationship between two variables is r. When squared, the correlation variable represents the proportion of common variation (strength and magnitude) between the variables measured (Salkin, 2000). A correlation of 0.4 or lower is weak, and a correlation of 0.7 or greater is strong.

The researcher calculated the correlation using the statistical analysis function in Excel (2007), and compared the average quality point scores for each of the low and high performing elementary schools with the math pass rates on the CRCT and FCAT. The resulting correlation was 0.64, thus there was a moderately strong level of correlation between the levels of teacher empowerment and school performance as measured by the SCS.

Figure 1 illustrates of the strength of the relationship between teacher empowerment and school performance in low-performing and high-performing elementary schools. The correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in the six schools was moderately strong. FLE Hi 1 had a perfect correlation and GAE Lo 2 had a rather strong correlation. The schools with the weakest correlation were GAE Hi 1 and FLE Hi 2 compared to the other four schools. In summary, the results revealed a strong relationship between school performance and teacher empowerment, thus indicating rejection of the null hypothesis, acceptance of the first alternate hypothesis, and rejection of the third alternate hypothesis.

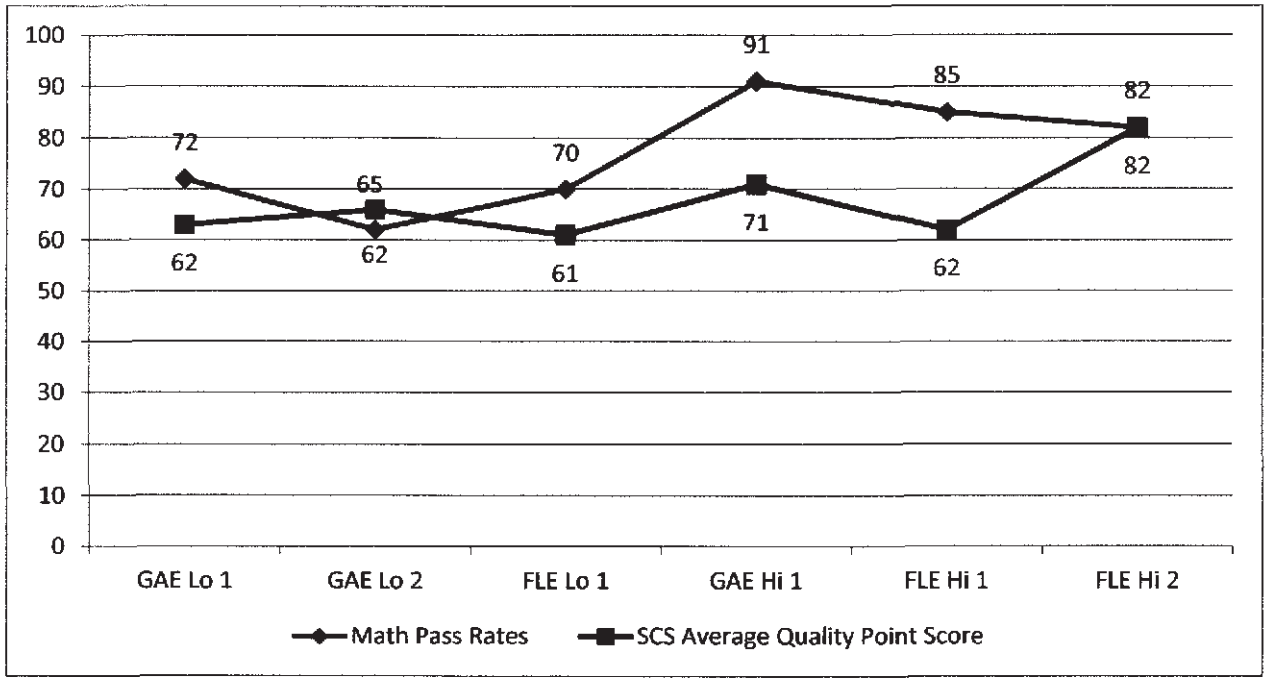

Figure 1. Comparison of average quality point scores for teacher empowerment and percent of students passing the CRCT and FCAT math assessments

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 provided the results of the analysis of data related to school performance and levels of teacher empowerment in low-performing and high-performing schools. Two posed research questions determined if there was a statistically significant difference in the levels of empowerment in low-performing and high-performing elementary schools, and whether there was a relationship between the levels of empowerment in schools as measured by the SCS and school performance as measured by Mathematics pass rates on the CRCT and FCAT. A hypothesis tested by statistical analysis accompanied each question. The results of the analysis revealed the following:

- There was a statistically significant difference in the levels of teacher empowerment in low-performing and high--performing elementary schools.

- There was a moderately strong correlation between levels of teacher empowerment as measured by the SCS and school performance as measured by student pass rates on the Mathematics portion of the CRCT and FCAT.

The final chapter of this dissertation contains a discussion of study results and implications for future research.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the SCS, and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida. According to Terry (1996), teacher empowerment was the cornerstone of school reform. He further contended successful schools promoted an environment conducive to continuous improvement. The leaders in successful schools constantly strive to implement strategies that improve teacher efficacy, increase decision-making skills, and promote professional growth. Byham and Cox (1992) noted several researchers emphasized teacher empowerment as the key component in improving student achievement and creating a more positive educational environment. Moreover, research supported the assumption that teacher empowerment closely aligned with greater organizational effectiveness (Lawler, 1986). Through empowerment, competent individuals with strong decision-making skills could take calculated risks, work in a positive environment, and provide optimal learning opportunities for students (Short & Johnson, 2003).

Reform literature supports the need for teacher empowerment (Martin et al., 2001). Short and Geer (1997) defined teacher empowerment as "the process whereby school participants develop competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems" (p. 488). Maylenzer (1990) added that "teacher empowerment is the

opportunity and confidence to act upon one's ideas to influence the way one performs in one's profession" (p. 4). Frymier (1987) stated that, "In any attempt to improve education, teachers are central" (p. 9). Further, Rinehart and Short (1994) emphasized that teacher empowerment included other dimensions, such as autonomy, self-efficacy, teacher impact, teacher perceptions of status, and opportunities for professional growth. They also noted that empowerment enabled individuals to become more responsible and accountable, thereby making decisions directly tied to student achievement.

Rinehart and Short (1994) contended teacher empowerment and school climate were closely correlated. Sergiovanni and Gorton (2001) posited a correlation between school climate and school performance. Teachers with high levels of empowerment had a more positive view of the school climate compared to those with low levels. Teachers with high levels of empowerment had higher levels of job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and a more positive view of their school, which correlated with school performance (Hoy et al., 2006). The primary responsibility of a principal is to create a positive school climate conducive to optimal teaching and learning. When teachers have a favorable perception of their work environment and are provided with the appropriate supports to be successful, it undoubtedly has a positive impact on school performance (Maslowski, 2001).

School culture incorporates the underlying values, assumptions, norms, and behavioral patterns that have the strongest impact on an organization (Dumay, 2009). School leaders should create a school culture wherein teachers feel empowered to work collaboratively and grow professionally. Teachers are more effective when this type of school culture is present (Edwards et al., 2002). School culture relates directly to teacher

empowerment and school performance. Schools cultures perceived to be positive provide more opportunities for teacher empowerment and higher school performance than do school cultures perceived as negative (Valente, 1999).

Related Literature

Teacher empowerment has become an important component of school improvement because teachers desire more active involvement (Bryke & Schneider, 2002). High-quality pedagogy and school performance closely relate to teacher empowerment, and teachers with higher levels of empowerment perform at more optimal levels (Louis & Marks, 1999). Moreover, they perceive themselves as being active participants in their schools with activities for professional growth and collaboration. Consequently, these complex organizations can foster a culture of collective learning (Schein, 1985). However, many educators have extremely low levels of teacher empowerment and report low levels of self-efficacy. They express exclusion from critical decisions and few opportunities for professional growth (Short & Greer, 1997). Louis and Marks (1999) reported many teachers with low levels of teacher empowerment displayed poor teaching practices, had little or no collective influence, and worked in a culture that bred distrust of administrators.

Rinehart and Short (1994) defined six dimensions of teacher empowerment: a) participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly impacted their work, b) teacher impact as an indicator in influencing school life, c) teacher status concerning professional respect from colleagues, d) autonomy related to teachers taking control over certain aspects of their work lives, e) professional development opportunities to promote continuous learning and expand skills, and f) self-efficacy and the ability to help students

learn. Teacher participation enables teachers to take part in important school decisions, decreases teacher isolation, and allows a sense of control over their work life. Teacher impact is a means of providing educators feedback based on their interactions with stakeholders such as parents, community members, faculty, and students. A study by Lightfoot (1986) reported significant growth occurred when teachers received feedback from parents and the community. It provided a true indication of student success outside the classroom. Teacher status refers to a teacher's self-esteem and the way in which colleagues, students, parents, supervisors, and community members perceive an educator's professionalism. Teacher status affords them opportunities to receive praise and constructive criticism related to their instruction and professionalism. Ashton and Webb (1986) emphasized praise and recognition could enhance teachers' self-esteem. Teacher autonomy promotes risk taking and enables teachers to hone decision-making skills. Teachers with high levels of autonomy ascribe to the notion they have control over important aspect of their work life. Professional development improves teacher competency and provides opportunities for lifelong learning. Teacher efficacy refers to the level of confidence educators have in their abilities. Armor et al. (1976) defined teacher efficacy as "the extent to which the teacher believed he or she had the capacity to affect student performance" (p. 7). Each of these dimensions is important in enhancing student achievement (Rinehart & Short, 1994).

Marks and Louis (1997) described empowerment in terms of participatory decision-making. They emphasized that decision making enhanced workers' knowledge, decreased worker isolation, and enabled the workers to understand the intricacies of the overall organization. It is the responsibility of school leaders to foster a school culture

and climate that creates participatory decision making. Blasé (1982) conducted studies on the different styles of leadership in schools and noted jeopardy of academic and social standards when teachers had little autonomy and no part in shared decision making. Leaders viewed as controlling and manipulative negatively impact communication, involvement, relationships, school culture, and climate. Glickman (1991) supported the notion that school leaders needed to shift from decision makers to facilitators. As teachers have more opportunities to make decisions, their sense of autonomy increases. Therefore, teachers experience higher levels of empowerment compared to individuals who do not participate in shared decision making. Additionally, Terry (1996) emphasized teacher empowerment closely related to increased job satisfaction and higher levels of teacher efficacy. Empowered teachers have the belief that they positively affect student performance.

Methodology

The current quantitative study took place in six elementary schools, selected for convenience and access, in the following school districts in South Georgia and Florida: SGD 1, SGD 2, FD 1, FD 2, and FD 3. The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between teacher empowerment as an element of school culture, measured with the SCS, and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing elementary schools in South Georgia and Florida. The following research questions, with accompanying hypotheses, guided the study.

RQ1: Does the SCS evidence a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS evidences no statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS evidences a statistically significant difference in the measure of teacher empowerment in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

RQ2: Does the SCS reveal correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools?

Ho: The SCS reveals no correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho1: The SCS reveals a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

Ho2: The SCS reveals a negative correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance in selected low-performing and high-performing South Georgia and Florida elementary schools.

The researcher or cohort peers contacted the principal of each selected elementary schools and determined a convenient time to administer the SCS. At that time, the researcher explained the confidentiality of the information and that no punitive measures would result from participation. The researcher explained the purpose and research design to the principals, noting ways in which the data could improve their school's

culture, organizational effectiveness, and student achievement. The researcher also asked the principals to identify dates on which the staff could complete the survey. All teachers completed the SCS. The SCS determines how a school faculty and the administration perceives and judges the school's culture, organizational effectiveness, and its progress toward a quality work life for students, teachers, and staff. The survey assesses the following themes: collaborative decision making, concern for school/stakeholders, continual school improvement focus, empowerment, human (needs) resources, intent/direction, leadership, management of excellence, professionalism, and teaming (Green, 2007). The researcher provided a thorough explanation of the different School Culture Survey data collection methods to the principals. The first method was the use of the Turning Point® clickers with which the staff could view the questions on a screen and choose their answer by clicking the corresponding button. The anonymous results for each question would display immediately on the screen. The second method was the paper and pencil administration in which the researcher projected each survey question on a screen and the staff replied on an answer document. The third method, which principals at each school preferred, was the electronic method. With this method, teachers assembled in the computer lab and completed the survey electronically during the allotted 50-minute period.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, the researcher used an independent *t* test to examine significant differences in teacher empowerment in high-performing and low-performing elementary schools and to determine the relationship between teacher empowerment and school performance. To determine differences in teacher empowerment in high-performing and

low- performing elementary schools and whether those differences were statistically significant, the researcher used a *t* test was used to compare the average quality points on the SCS from the high-performing schools and the low-performing schools. To determine a relationship between teacher empowerment and school performance, a Pearson's r correlation was used to compare the average quality points on the SCS for each individual school to performance on the Mathematics scores on the CRCT and FCAT.

Limitations

The current study took place in the rural districts of two southern states: Georgia (SGD 1 and SGD 2) and Florida (FD 1, FD 2, and FD 3). Only schools at the elementary level participated in the survey and the sample size was small. This study consisted of only quantitative data and could have added strength with qualitative data. Qualitative data could provide specific information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of teacher empowerment elements in each school, especially from an administrator's perspective. This might aid school administrators in identifying which areas of teacher empowerment need immediate attention. It would have been interesting to conduct this study in larger urban school districts and in different regions of the country to determine the specific elements of teacher empowerment consistently strongest and weakest in areas with different demographics. Further, it would have been interesting to examine the data over a longer time as opposed to the three-year school year span: 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011. Observation of school performance over a longer period might have added depth to the study. It would also have been interesting to conduct this study in recently restructured low-performing schools under a veteran principal and to compare to a recently restructured low-performing school with a less experienced principal.

Additionally, it would have been interesting to conduct this study in high-performing schools with veteran principals and compare the data to high-performing schools with less experienced principals. Finally, a study that focused primarily on comparing the administrators' perceptions of the levels of teacher empowerment to the teachers' perceptions of teacher empowerment would provide school administrators with a realistic perspective of the levels of teacher empowerment in each school.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice in the Field

The findings in this study concluded a significant difference in the levels of teacher empowerment in low-performing and high-performing schools. Additionally, the researcher determined a moderately strong correlation between school performance and teacher empowerment in both types of schools was found. These findings should provide a rationale for educators, specifically principals, to be aware of the linkage between teacher empowerment and school performance and to work to enhance that element within the culture of the school.

Another key component of this study identified the strongest and weakest elements of teacher empowerment in both low-performing and high-performing elementary schools. Teachers in low-performing and high-performing schools scored highest on Item 44–*Team members are given the necessary information, resources and decision-making authority needed to do quality work.* Teachers in each type of school perceived the administration afforded them opportunities to use materials in a productive manner. Additionally, the administration provided resources to best meet the needs of their learners. Both low-performing and high-performing schools scored lowest on Item 20–*Decisions are decentralized, with the vast majority of decisions being pushed down in*

the organization and Item 29–*Everyone participates in everything.* It appeared many teachers perceived that administrators had authority to make decisions, while faculty received directives and had little input on major decisions. Teachers also perceived that opportunities for growth were unavailable to all but a few staff members.

The key implication of these findings for school administrators in both low-performing and high-performing schools is that teachers need opportunities to become more active members in decision making. In addition, administrators should receive feedback from teachers to determine in which specific decisions teachers desire to take an active role. Finally, it is imperative for administrators to implement activities that foster collaboration as a means of decreasing the likelihood that teachers will work in isolation and as a means of increasing self-efficacy and autonomy. As teachers begin to collaborate effectively, administrators can foster an environment conducive to an authentic professional learning community and teachers can gain more experience with decision making and problem solving. A key desired outcome of this increased sense of empowerment and involvement is the establishment of strong, productive, self-managed teams.

Discussion

Based on the data from the SCS, teachers in low-performing schools perceived resources as distributed in a fair, equitable, and understandable manner. The information was openly communicated and accessible to all faculty members. Low-performing schools also perceived that their administration equipped them with the tools to make appropriate decisions. Team members had necessary information, resources, and decision-making authority to do quality work. Teachers in low-performing schools felt

that their organizational design enabled them to make appropriate decisions related to instruction. However, in both types of schools, decisions were centralized. Decisions were derived from the administrative level and pushed down to teachers. Many of the teachers desired more autonomy in school-wide decision making. Teachers perceived that their school administrators were uncomfortable relinquishing power to the teachers. As a result, leadership was not evident within teams, and many of the teams did not have clearly defined roles. Additionally, teachers did not feel empowered because of the ineffective delegation of duties. They did not perceive the administration as providing the appropriate supports for them to grow professionally.

Based on the data from the SCS, teachers in high-performing schools perceived that their administrators empowered them to perform successfully. The data showed that their administration promoted autonomy for instructional practices and effective decision making as a means of improving school performance. Teachers perceived that the administration provided the proper amount of support and structure to empower staff members in high-performing schools. Additionally, the administration demonstrated effective decision-making practices, relinquished power to the teachers, and provided appropriate guidance when needed. In high-performing schools, teachers perceived that information and resources were readily available for team members to work effectively, produce quality work, and take the most appropriate action when needed. However, teachers in high-performing schools perceived decision making among school leaders was top-heavy and centralized; not only was the leadership structure not bottom-up but also leadership was not evident among teams within the organizations.

As teachers desire to assume more active roles, teacher empowerment has become an important component of school improvement (Bryrd & Schneider, 2002). High-quality pedagogy and school performance closely align with teacher empowerment, and teachers with higher levels of empowerment perform at more optimal levels (Marks & Louis, 1997). Moreover, they perceive themselves as being active participants in their schools and were frequently provided with activities for professional growth and collaboration.

School performance related to teacher empowerment was the major focus of this study. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to aid principals participating in this study to determine which areas of teacher empowerment were strongest and weakest based on the perception of their staff.

The study supported the findings of several researchers that concluded teacher empowerment correlated to teacher effectiveness and school culture (Byham & Cox, 1992; Edwards et al., 2002). The components of teacher empowerment perceived to be weakest can provide school leaders, particularly school administrators, with information on how to equip teachers with the appropriate skills, materials, resources, and opportunities to positively affect student achievement. The strongest elements of teacher empowerment can provide school administrators with the knowledge of which strategies and practices are effective in their schools with regard to student achievement. It is important that school administrators strive to improve those elements of teacher empowerment that are weakest in their schools.

School administrators should have awareness of teacher perceptions related to empowerment. More importantly, administrators must be willing to provide a culture and climate that fosters the different components of teacher empowerment: autonomy, self-

efficacy, shared decision making, collaboration, and trust. This study revealed a moderately strong correlation between teacher empowerment and school performance. Further, administrators must pay careful attention to the weakest levels of teacher empowerment and give immediate attention to developing strategies to improve teacher empowerment in their schools. Administrators should create an open line of communication wherein teachers feel comfortable addressing their concerns, but both parties should also be open to accepting constructive criticism. This may aid improving student achievement and promoting professional and personal growth.

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APPENDIX A:

Internal Review Board Form

FROM : FAX NO. : Dec. 23 2011 08:23AM P1

for Graduate Student Research

Project Title:	The Effects of Teacher Empowerment on School Performance in Selected South Georgia and Florida Schools
Name:	Megan Lyons
Department:	Educational Leadership
E-mail:	mslyons@valdosta.edu
Telephone:	(404)630-8155

Please indicate the academic purpose of the proposed research:
☒ Doctoral Dissertation
☐ Master's Thesis
☐ Other:

RECEIVED MAR 20 2012 VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

1. ☐ YES ☒ NO **Will you utilize *existing identifiable private* information about living individuals?** "Existing" information is data that were previously collected for some other purpose, either by the researcher or, more commonly, by another party. "Identifiable" means that the identities of the individuals can be ascertained by the researcher by name, code number, pattern of answers, or in some other way, regardless of whether or not the researcher needs to know the identities of the individuals for the proposed research project. "Private" information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place or information provided for specific purposes that the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (e.g., a medical record or student record).

   Note: If you are using data that: (1) are publicly available; (2) were collected from individuals anonymously (i.e., no identifying information was included when the data were first collected); (3) will be de-identified before being given to the researcher, (i.e., the owner of the data will strip identifying information so that the researcher cannot ascertain the identities of individuals); or (4) do not include any private information about the individuals, regardless of whether or not the identities of the individuals can be ascertained, your response to Question 1 should be NO.

2. ☐ YES ☒ NO **Will you *interact* with individuals to obtain data?** "Interaction" includes communication or interpersonal contact between the researcher and the research participant, such as testing, surveying, interviewing, or conducting a focus group. It does not include observation of public behavior when the researcher does not participate in the activities being observed.

3. ☐ YES ☒ NO **Will you *intervene* with individuals to obtain data?** "Intervention" includes manipulation of the individual or his/her environment for research purposes, as well as using physical procedures (e.g., measuring body composition, using a medical device, collecting a specimen) to gather data for research purposes.

If you answered YES to ANY of the above questions, your research is subject to Institutional Review Board oversight. Please discard this form and complete and submit an IRB application. Do not begin your research until your application has been reviewed by the IRB and you are informed of the outcome of the review.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

If you answered NO to ALL of the above questions, your research is not subject to Institutional Review Board oversight. Stop here, sign below, secure your faculty advisor's signature, and submit this form to the Graduate School. Please remember that, even though your project is not subject to IRB oversight, you should still observe ethical principles in the conduct of your research.

STUDENT CERTIFICATION: I certify that my responses to the above questions accurately describe my proposed research.

Student's Signature: Megan Lyons Date: 2/12/2012

FACULTY ADVISOR CERTIFICATION: I have reviewed the student's proposed research and concur that it is not subject to Institutional Review Board oversight.

Faculty Advisor's Signature: Rodney Green Date: 3/17/2012

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