

Teacher Assessment of School Climate and Its Relationship to Years of Working with an Elementary School Administrator

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The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and the number of years worked with an elementary school administrator. A secondary purpose was to determine if a relationship existed between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and the total number of years teaching experience.

The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools was distributed to all elementary teachers in the Kearney, Nebraska School District. Of the 151 surveys distributed during April 2005, 132 were returned for a return rate of 87.4%.

Teacher responses on the surveys were tallied based on the composite school climate score, as well as the scores received for the following dimensions of climate: supportive behavior, directive behavior, restrictive behavior, and principal openness. The survey results were grouped by interval years of 1-4 years, 5-10 years, and 11 or more years based upon years worked with an elementary administrator, as well as total years of teaching experience.

Analysis of the data indicated that there was no significant relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary administrator, nor was there a significant relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and total years of teaching experience. Additionally, there was no significant difference in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based upon years worked with an elementary administrator as well as based upon years of teaching experience. A negative correlation was found between supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator. Another negative correlation was found between principal openness and years worked with an elementary school administrator.

The study concluded that the years of association between a teacher and an elementary school administrator in the same elementary school have little relationship to teachers' perceptions of school climate. Another conclusion based on this study was that the longer elementary teachers work with an elementary school administrator, the less supportive they view the administrator's behavior. A final conclusion was drawn that the longer elementary teachers work with an elementary school administrator, the less open they view the principal's behavior.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Organizational climate is a major factor in the lives of educators who teach, learn, and grow professionally in schools. School climate can be a positive factor in the lives of educators or a significant roadblock to learning. Dedicated administrators who are working toward improved school climate are making conscious efforts to enhance and enrich the culture and conditions in the schools so that teachers can teach better and students can learn more (Hansen & Childs, 1998).

School climate can be defined as the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shape how people think, feel, and act in schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Gottfredson and Hollifield (1988) stated that school climate is the single most important factor in whether a school succeeds with its students.

Therefore, the need to establish a positive school climate is quite obvious. Research on school effectiveness supports the importance of a positive school environment, often referred to as the climate of a school, where effective teaching and learning occur. Responsibility for establishing a positive school climate begins with the principal, who provides leadership in developing and maintaining a climate conducive to learning (Dietrich & Bailey, 1996). The relationship between school climate and leadership behaviors is one factor of

school success that can not be ignored. Continual and varied feedback on school climate can afford school leaders the information necessary to provide direction for school and classroom-based efforts. Teachers are key partners in the learning environment, and their perceptions on school climate need to be assessed in order to improve and maintain educational excellence (Freiberg, 1998).

The vision that is articulated by the school principal can become the foundation for developing a healthy school climate. Once the principal communicates a vision for the school, it is then up to the staff to carry out that vision (Checkley, 2000). According to Bamburg (1994), it is the principal's role to provide an environment in which teachers are encouraged to take risks that lead to increased student achievement. The principal can use school climate surveys to assess the degree to which teachers truly feel supported in their school improvement efforts.

The most successful schools are led by principals who find ways to involve the entire staff in school improvement efforts (Deal & Peterson, 1990). Sagor (1992) reported that it is imperative that principals constantly push for improved academic performance. Principals who can read, and then shape, the climate of a school will gain a greater understanding of how to positively affect student achievement (Deal & Peterson).

A school climate instrument can provide that perceptual feedback to school leaders. Administrators can use the results of school climate surveys to

gauge the success of planned interventions directed toward an improved environment for teaching and learning (Gottfredson & Hollifield, 1988). Teachers' perceptions of school climate are strongly influenced by the leadership practices of administrators; in fact, according to Hoy and Clover (1986), the single most important individual affecting the climate of the school is the principal.

The lack of available research about the number of years a teacher has worked with a principal and its relationship on school climate, as well as the lack of available research on district administrators' perceptions on principal tenure in a school building emphasizes the need for such information to be researched. By examining the various components that make up school climate and the correlation between each of those components and the numbers of years a teacher has worked with an elementary school administrator, this study adds to the body of knowledge that administrators have as they manage the improvement of school climate, principal rotation in urban districts, and the tenure of an administrative position in a particular setting.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine what relationship exists between teachers' assessment of school climate and the number of years teachers have worked with an elementary school administrator in several midwestern elementary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
2. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
4. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
5. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
6. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
7. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?

8. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

9. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

10. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

11. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?

12. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?

Significance of the Study

This study provides information leading to a better understanding of the relationship between school climate and teachers' years of working with an elementary school administrator. By examining the various components that make up school climate and the correlation between each of those components with the number of years a teacher has worked with an elementary principal, this study may guide administrators concerned with improving school climate in their schools.

The findings may be used by colleges and universities that educate students in the area of educational leadership. School district administration may use this information to provide professional growth opportunities to its principals, as well as integrate it into the evaluation, selection, and placement systems for principals. Superintendents may also use this research to determine whether principals should be moved to a new building after several years of working in a particular school setting.

Definition of Terms

In order to provide understanding and meaning in this study, the following definitions of terms are provided. Definitions without references were developed by the author.

Collegial teacher behavior supports open and professional interactions among teachers. Indicators of a high level of collegial behavior are that teachers are proud of their school, enjoy working with their colleagues, and are enthusiastic, accepting, and mutually respectful of their colleagues (Hoy, 2004).

Directive principal behavior is rigid, close supervision. An indication of directive principal behavior is that the principal maintains constant monitoring and control over all teacher and school activities, down to the smallest detail (Hoy, 2004).

Disengaged teacher behavior signifies a lack of meaning and focus to professional activities. An indication of disengaged teacher behavior is that teachers are simply putting in time in non-productive group efforts; they have no

common goals. In fact, their behavior is often negative and critical of their colleagues and the school (Hoy, 2004).

Elementary schools serve students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade.

Intimate teacher behavior is cohesive and supports strong social relations that exist among teachers. Indicators of intimate teacher behavior are that teachers know each other well, are close personal friends, socialize together regularly, and provide strong social support for each other (Hoy, 2004).

Openness in principal behavior is marked by genuine concern for the ideas of teachers, freedom and encouragement for teachers to experiment and act independently, and structuring the routine aspects of the job so that they do not interfere with teaching (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

Openness in teacher behavior refers to teachers' interactions that are meaningful and tolerant; are friendly, close, and supportive; and are enthusiastic, accepting, and mutually respectful (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE) is a short organizational climate descriptive measure for elementary schools. The index has six dimensions: collegial teacher behavior, directive principal behavior, disengaged teacher behavior, intimate teacher behavior, restrictive principal behavior, and supportive principal behavior (Hoy, 2004).

Restrictive principal behavior is behavior that hinders rather than facilitates teacher work. An indication of restrictive principal behavior is that the principal

burdens teachers with paper work, committee requirements, routine duties, and other demands that interfere with their teaching responsibilities (Hoy, 2004).

School climate is a reflection of the informal stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that shape how those in the school think, feel, and act (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Supportive principal behavior reflects a basic concern for teachers. An indication of supportive principal behavior is that the principal listens and is open to teacher suggestions. Praise is given genuinely and frequently, and criticism is handled constructively. The competence of the faculty is respected, and the principal exhibits both a personal and professional interest in teachers (Hoy, 2004).

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study may be limited by the following factors:

1. The school climate surveys were limited to the respondents from one midwestern elementary school district. The findings may not generalize to other school districts due to differences in size, geographical location, student composition, and faculty composition.

2. School climate changes according to several factors and, depending upon the time of year the survey was given, the results may vary. Such inconsistency may make it difficult to generalize the results obtained in this study to other times during the school year.

3. Although every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of the teachers who responded to the school climate survey, the survey was administered within the school setting. Some teachers may have not felt comfortable responding with their true perceptions, and this may have skewed the results.

4. Due to increased accountability and No Child Left Behind legislation, teachers may have perceived some of the principal behavior questions on the survey in a different light than they would have in previous years due to contemporary elementary principal behavior.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made for the purpose of this study:

1. It was assumed that all respondents who answered the survey clearly understood the questions and instructions.

2. It was assumed that all respondents gave unbiased responses honestly and to the best of their abilities.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction, statement of the problem, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations of the study, assumptions of the study, and organization of the study. A review of selected literature related to school climate and principal behaviors is found in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the methodology that was used to gather the data for the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data

collection and the answers to the research questions. The summary, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature and Research

Chapter 2 provides a selective review of literature and research related to the topics of school climate and leadership behaviors. The review consists of sections which are related to the rationale for studying the relationship between school climate and the number of years a teacher has worked with an elementary school administrator. The chapter is divided into sections that include (a) a definition of school climate, (b) the role of the principal in establishing or changing school climate, and (c) the dimensions of school climate as were measured in this study.

School Climate

The sense of how a school feels is often identified as the school climate (Karpicke & Murphy, 1996; Sweeney, 1992). The feel of a school is difficult to describe; however, parents, teachers, principals, and students have always sensed something special, yet undefined, about their schools. The concept of schools having distinctive cultures is not new. Willard Waller wrote in 1932: “Schools have a culture that is definitely their own. There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 8).

The school culture dictates that feeling or the way the staff members do things around the school (Barth, 2001). The school’s culture is influenced by formal and informal relations, personalities of the staff members, and leadership

of the school (Hoy & Tarter, 1992). The culture is manifested in people's patterns of behavior, mental maps, and social norms.

School climates vary as they take their cues from a wide variety of sources, such as local economic and social conditions and expectations. In response to a variety of influences from both inside and outside the school setting, climate can be affected by positive and negative events that occur within the school and within the community (Bonstigl, 2001). Because values differ and culture expresses values, cultures differ (Ashby & Krug, 1998). Culture is reflected by the set of beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes held by a given set of people during a given period of time (Lambert, 1998).

School climate consists of a shared set of values or beliefs. According to Keefe and Kelley (1990), school climate is a pattern of shared perceptions held by teachers, students, and the community. Not only does the school community share the perception of school climate, they are directly influenced by it (Hoy & Hannum, 1997). While climate most directly affects the members of the school community who spend the majority of their day within the school, it has repercussions that extend into the geographic community that supports the school (Balfanz & Maciver, 2000; Conner & Krajewski, 1996).

Even though climates are variable, they are still resistant to change. Peterson and Deal (2002) viewed climate as complex webs of traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents, and administrators work together and deal with crises and accomplishments. These

cultural patterns are highly enduring, have a powerful impact on performance, and shape the way people think, act, and feel (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

Barth (2001) stated that probably the most important and the most difficult job of the school-based reformer is to change the prevailing culture of a school. It is, therefore, imperative that teachers and administrators act to change the culture of a school or all innovations will have to fit in and around existing elements of the culture.

The elements that make up school climate are complex. Every aspect of the school is shaped, formed, and molded by underlying symbolic elements. School culture influences what people pay attention to, how they identify with the school, how hard they work, and the degree to which they achieve their goals (Deal & Peterson, 1999). However, no single factor determines a school's climate (Freiburg, 1998). The interaction of various school and classroom climate factors can create a foundation of support that enables all members of the school community to teach and learn at high levels.

Various descriptors are used to characterize school climate. School climate has been described as a metaphor for a complex phenomenon that is easy to perceive but difficult to define, measure, or manipulate (Ellis, 1998). For many educators, the terms climate and ethos describe this organizational phenomenon (Peterson & Deal, 2002). The definitions of climate and culture are often blurred. According to Ashforth (1985), a useful distinction is that culture

consists of shared assumptions and ideologies, whereas climate is defined by shared perceptions of behaviors (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

School climate also is characterized by the social interactions between members of the school community. Lisa Delpit, author of *Other People's Children*, wrote that if the cultural messages of a school, spoken and unspoken, serve to undermine a child's culture or loved ones, then that child's desire to learn will be placed in direct conflict with his or her attachment to home (Strand & Patrician, 2001). According to Strand and Patrician, the messages a school sends through its structure, organization, even its physical space and the behavior it encourages and enables, affects every person in that school. School climate reaches all students, all teachers, and all parents: everyone who is a part of the school community. A shared sense of community nurtures active engagement in learning. Both students and teachers learn more and do more when they feel a part of something important that is larger than themselves and that they have helped to create. Educational leaders must work to nurture engagement and commitment rooted in community (Wagner, 2001).

School climate exists in multiple dimensions and components. Individuals can perceive climate in their own unique way. It then makes sense that the perception of climate may be the climate for each individual in the school setting. The affective nature of climate is inherent in its description, but it is how the individual reacts to those affective perceptions, both individually and as part of a group, that determines the significance of the climate to the organization

(Dejnozka, 1983). After all, what personality is to the individual is what organizational climate is to the organization (Hoy & Clover, 1986).

How others view the group's perceptions of an organization becomes the climate (Hoy & Tarter, 1992). Whether the perceptions of climate are those held by the teachers within a school or by the students, the collective consensus of climate based on the group's perceptions becomes the climate of the organization (Dunn & Harris, 1998).

The unwritten norms of social expectations found in a culture influence almost everything that happens. The culture influences the way teachers, students, and administrators think, feel, and act (Peterson & Deal, 2002). Therefore, Peterson and Deal feel it is imperative that leaders must shape and nourish a culture where every teacher can make a difference and every child can learn.

The Principal's Role in Developing School Climate

Since school climate is composed of multiple dimensions, it could be argued that many people are responsible for establishing or changing it. However, a consensus has emerged among researchers that the person most influential in determining or altering the climate of a school is the principal (Ellis, 1988). The contribution of effective leadership is largest when it is needed the most; there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of an intervention by talented leaders (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

It is the principal who is given control of the formal organization, and it is the principal whose leadership practices set the stage for the normative and behavioral structure of the informal organization (Hoy & Clover, 1986). By virtue of the position, choices made by the principal are likely to exert a greater influence on culture than are those made by other organizational members (Reitzug & Reeves, 1992). Maehrer and Parker (1993, p. 239) stated that “Managing organizational culture is an important, possibly the preeminent, role of leadership, albeit an overwhelming prospect at first.” Principal behavior patterns have been shown to affect teacher motivation, involvement, morale, stress levels, and job satisfaction (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

However, a school’s culture has been created well before most principals arrive in their current position. Most principals must work with a cultural tapestry that is already woven (Deal & Peterson, 1990). The role of school leaders in the crafting of culture is pervasive. Their words, their nonverbal messages, their actions, and their accomplishments all affect culture (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Every aspect of the school is shaped, formed, and molded by underlying symbolic elements. Although not all cultural aspects are easily shaped by leaders, over time leadership can have a powerful influence on the emerging cultural patterns (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

Former Secretary of Education William Bennett concluded that what makes schools effective is the “principal of the thing” (Karpicke & Murphy, 1996, p. 26). While principals cannot improve students’ growth or achievement alone,

they do provide the leadership and support that translate into an environment that results in increased productivity. Research on school effectiveness supports the importance of a positive school environment where effective teaching and learning occur (Dietrich & Bradley, 1996).

Studies of principal influence have shown how important informal power is in working effectively with teachers (Blase, 2000). School culture enhances school effectiveness and productivity. Teachers and students are more likely to experience success in a culture that fosters hard work, commitment to valued ends, an attention to problem solving, and a focus on learning for all students (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

It is through management of school culture that those in leadership roles can and do affect the lives and learning of students, which is the ultimate responsibility of principals (Maeher & Parker, 1993). Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Leithwood et. al, 2004). The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a quarter of total school effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

A principal must believe that the school mission is student academic success and then work to communicate that belief and create a climate in which all stakeholders share in the mission (McEwan, 1998; Saphier & King). The principal will need to ensure that all members of the school community keep their focus on achievement and then work with them to implement the programs and

attitudes necessary for that to happen (Hoy & Tarter, 1992; Sagor, 1992). A school that has a climate where the focus is on achievement will be a place where “teachers can teach better and students can learn more” (Hansen & Childs, 1998, p. 14). Perceived purpose is at the heart of school life, work, and ultimate effectiveness (Maher & Parker, 1993). Evidence suggests that those leadership practices aimed at helping one’s colleagues develop a shared understanding about the organization and its activities and goals that can foster a sense of purpose account for the largest proportion of a leader’s impact (Leithwood et. al, 2004).

In order for students to succeed, they must feel safe and nurtured. Principals must understand their leadership role in establishing how the climate looks or feels (Brandt, 1992; Sagor, 1992; Saphier & King, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1992). Principals must continuously promote a climate that is safe and nurturing in order for students to achieve academically (Barth, 2001). Establishing a climate that is open and caring and in which everyone feels comfortable and nurtured is of critical importance if the principal hopes to positively impact the culture of the school (Hansen & Childs, 1998; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Saphier & King, 1985).

When establishing a positive school climate so that students can succeed, the principal needs to involve others to provide a sense of ownership. The principal needs to work to enhance school climate through developing a role not as “an instructional leader, but rather a leader of instructional leaders” (Fullan,

1992b, p. 20). That role has the principal involving members of the school community in the quest for student achievement and also empowering those individuals to assume leadership roles (Neuman & Simmons, 2000). Leaders need to take advantage of all the leadership potential in their school community members and lead those individuals in developing a climate of collaboration and support (Bolman & Deal, 1994; Fullan, 1992a). A belief that all children can learn, along with teachers and school leaders who demonstrate that belief through their behavior, can result in improved student achievement (Johnson et al., 2000).

As school community members are empowered, the importance of the school principal in sharing the vision of what the school is and should become increases (Fullan, 1992b). A study by House in 1997 on the impact of leadership behaviors on effective team performance found that first, leaders have a vision that others find compelling; second, they are able to recruit a group of people who share that vision and are team players; and third, by virtue of the relationship they develop with the team members, such leaders are able to persuade them to work for and to support the vision (Hogan et al., 1994). If that vision is successfully articulated and the principal shows commitment to it, other members of the school staff will invest in developing the positive climate as well (Fullan, 1992a; Sweeney, 1992).

The more effective a principal is at communicating values and aligning the goals of the school district to the values and behavior of all groups within the

school community, the more likely such goals will be accomplished (Buell, 1992). However, the most effective principals realize that the process of developing a vision never ends (Keefe & Howard, 1997; Peterson & Deal, 1998). If schools are to be viewed as effective, then school leaders should be ready to change, to restructure the way their schools operate, to rethink their goals and priorities, to create a climate within their schools where students and teachers can take risks, to involve parents and the community in a meaningful way, and to plan strategically for the future (Johnson et al., 2000).

Positive school climate is correlated with teachers' perceptions that they can trust their principal, that they can get help when they need it, that they are respected as professionals, and that they are involved in the decisions that affect them the most (Ellis, 1998). Ellis has reported that the principal is key in developing the kind of climate that will raise the morale and achievement of teachers and students. Recent evidence suggests that emotional intelligence displayed through a leader's personal attention to an employee's capacities increases the employee's enthusiasm and optimism, reduces frustration, transmits a sense of mission, and indirectly increases performance (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002).

Carol Schweitzer (2000, p. 35) stated: "The bottom line is that the leader is the primary culture carrier for the organization. If the leader's attitudes and behaviors do not match the culture that you are intending to build, it will not work. The leader and the culture must be in sync." Relationships are a key variable in

principals' success. Paul Houston (2001, p. 431) wrote that, "Leadership of the future will be about the creation and maintenance of relationships: the relationship of children to learning, children to children, children to adults, adults to adults, and school to community."

The Dimensions of School Climate

Supportive Behavior

Hoy and Clover (1986, p. 101) defined supportive behavior as "principal behavior that reflects a basic concern for teachers." The supportive principal is open to teacher suggestions and respects the professional competence of the staff. The principal gives genuine praise, but at the same time gives out constructive criticism. As one of the dimensions of school climate, supportive principal leadership may be the characteristic most directly related to how positively a staff perceives its principal. Supportive principal behavior is reflective of how the principal develops relationships with staff members and is a measure of how effectively the principal is able to communicate his or her vision (Hoy & Hannum, 1998).

Supportive principals exhibit both a personal and professional interest in the well-being of their teachers. According to research on effective practitioners in the helping professions, what leaders believe about the people they work with is of major significance (Combs & Whitaker, 1999). The supportive leader is a professional who is concerned not only with the task but also with healthy, interpersonal relations among teachers (Hoy et al., 1992). Based on respect for

individual staff members, a principal who is supportive is one who expresses genuine concern for his or her colleagues (Fullan, 2002; Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Sagor, 1992). A principal who is viewed as open and friendly by the staff is a principal who understands the importance of developing individual relationships (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Fullan, 1992a). Rosenholtz (1989) has linked commitment in teachers to supportive principal behaviors such as feedback, encouragement, acknowledgment, use of participative decision making, and collaborative problem solving (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

The relationships formed by the principal with individual teachers, and the impact they have on student achievement, are at the core of developing and maintaining a positive school climate (Blase & Kirby, 2000). According to Fullan (1992b), the single factor common to every successful change is the improvement of relationships. While the building principal must involve the entire school in improving a poor school climate or maintaining a positive one, that involvement will happen most effectively through developing positive one-to-one relationships (Sagor, 1992). Fullan (2002) suggested that when principals establish individual relationships with teachers who are disconnected, the impact on the climate of the entire school could be a profound one.

The teacher response to supportive leadership behavior is commitment, cooperation, and trust (Hoy et al., 1990; Hoy et al., 1992; Tarter & Hoy, 1988; Tarter et al., 1990). The principal who can improve the setting of the classroom by influencing the larger social system earns the commitment of the teachers

(Tarter et al., 1990). Organizational commitment and trust have been linked to organizational productivity (Blau & Scott, 1961; Hoy et al., 1992). Principals must support their teachers, protect their teachers, and deliver for their teachers. Principals must be as committed to their schools as the teachers. Commitment is a group phenomenon as much as an individual one (Hoy et al., 1989). Highly effective principals are deeply committed to worthy ideals and values; they derive meaning in their lives from this commitment, and they are constantly reflecting and reexamining their personal and professional goals based on this commitment (McEwan, 2003).

Researchers have found that certain behaviors of principals such as being competent managers, promoting professional growth and curriculum development, and empowering teachers all encourage teachers to trust their principals. They also discovered that the most important factor leading to a teacher trusting a principal is the principal being kind to the teacher (Ceyanes & MacNeil, 1998). An effective principal realizes that pride in the school has its origins in achievement on several levels: personal, classroom, and school (Sweeney, 1992). When principals involve teachers in school decisions, it will lead to greater faculty effort, persistence, and commitment (Hoy & Miskel, 2002). As teachers are encouraged to realize their own capabilities, they are more likely to encourage their students to do the same (Sweeney, 1992).

As a principal works beside the staff to solve problems, he or she is providing both verbal and nonverbal communication that motivates others to

assume leadership roles (Sagor, 1992; Fullan, 2002). The interpersonal skills of the principal make the difference in the willingness of teacher leaders to take on leadership roles (Moller, 1999). A principal who listens, encourages, and advocates for these teacher leaders gives them the courage to take on the formidable task of spearheading innovation within the school.

When considering teacher commitment, involvement, and innovation, Blase and Kirby (2000) contended that supporting teacher professionalism was the most influential leadership behavior at both the elementary and the secondary levels. Providing support for teachers will impact the entire staff in a positive manner (Saphier & King, 1985; Sweeney, 1992). By being a good listener to staff members, by responding in a manner that is respectful and empowering, and by asking higher-level questions that lead to better decisions, the supportive leader uses his or her understanding of the importance of being open to developing relationships as the basis for being the leader of the school (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Effective leaders store lessons learned from persons whom they admire or from actions that they respect and utilize them for the benefit of the students and staff members (Dyer & Carothers, 2000).

In a school culture that values collegiality and collaboration, there is a positive climate for the social and professional exchange of ideas, the enhancement and spread of effective practices, and widespread professional problem solving (Deal & Peterson, 1999). It is the role of a supportive principal to provide teachers with the right combination of pressure to improve, along with

meaningful support for individual and school-wide improvement (Sagor, 1992). Principals who are secure create opportunities for their staff to collaborate and share authority with them, which, in turn, enhances a shared sense of purpose, trust, and value (Villani, 2000).

When teachers are encouraged to realize their own strengths and abilities, they are more likely to encourage their students to do the same (Sweeney, 1992). Principals must establish a standard of excellence for the staff and students to emulate (Dufour & Burnette, 2002; Dyer & Carothers, 2000). Concomitant with the high expectations is a care ethic. Showing students and their parents that the school believes all students can learn at a high level, combined with the support students need to meet those expectations, is likely to result in improved student performance (Johnson et al., 2000).

Directive Behavior

Hoy and Clover (1986, p. 101) defined directive behavior as “principal behavior that is rigid and involves close supervision.” The directive principal maintains constant monitoring and control over all teacher and school activities, down to the smallest detail. Many directive principals are described as being micromanagers.

Teachers who had principals who micromanaged, emphasized deadlines, and asked teachers to follow strict rules and regulations reported higher levels of dissatisfaction (Namishan, 1989). Studies of principal influence have shown that teachers are much more responsive to principals’ influence when based on

human relations skills and technical expertise rather than the use of hierarchical authority (Blase, 2000). The collegial leader recognizes that an authority that is shared is more genuine than an authority that comes from position only, whereas a directive leader has a difficult time sharing his or her control (Dyer & Carothers, 2000; Neuman & Simmons, 2000). Anne Lieberman stated that principals are not expected to control teachers but to support them and to create opportunities for them to grow and develop (1995, p. 9).

There are some emotional implications for leaders who are learning to “let go” of control in shared governance of schools (Blase & Blase, 1997). Principals mandated to implement distributed leadership in their schools reported emotional and professional rewards for themselves and their teachers. However, the anxiety and fear that accompanied making the adjustment held them back and in some cases made them feel as if their ability was undermined to even try and make the necessary changes (Beatty, 1999).

There is a connection for teachers between the emotions of feeling safe and secure while engaged in authentic collaborative professional learning and creative risk taking in shared leadership (Beatty, 1999). However, the relationship between teachers’ emotions and those of the leader may be one of inverse proportionality. Many leaders have shared that the more secure and empowered the teacher, the more threatened, insecure, and anxious their emotional experience (Blase & Blase, 1997). However, research has shown that when school improvement initiatives have disintegrated, it was often because the

principal made the mistake of going it alone (Kanter, 1983; Kotter, 1996). A principal's disposition to share leadership with teachers appears related to personal security. Roland Barth (2001, p. 109) stated, "Many of us have observed that the weaker the principal is personally, the less the principal is likely to share leadership. Stronger, more secure principals are more likely to share leadership."

Directive principals tend to focus more on student achievement or production rather than on authentic interactions with staff members (Henderson, 1998). Teachers can see through clever, though insincere, attempts to demonstrate consideration, collegueship, influence, and authority (Tarter & Hoy, 1988). According to Tarter, Hoy, and Bliss (1989), teachers must feel free to reject advice from the principal when it conflicts with the professional norm. Directive principals must learn to accept the mistakes that come with professional judgment. Teachers and principals who are committed to the school are willing to coordinate their own interests and work together for the good of the school and students.

Because directive principals do not like to relinquish control, many teachers working with them feel as if the principal does not trust them. Directive principals may be perceived as being threatening. Teachers need to feel comfortable to say what they think, even if they know that their opinions will run counter to those held by the principal (Blase & Kirby, 2001; Sagor, 1992). The ability to compromise and reach mutually agreeable solutions between the leader

and teacher takes a measure of trust on the part of both individuals (Fullan, 2002; Sweeney, 1992). A directive principal is perceived by the staff as working to improve the school from the top down. Such an approach is the direct opposite of an environment in which staff members feel safe (Karpicke & Murphy, 1996).

Close supervision and rigid domination of teachers has been found to be negatively related to commitment of teachers and confirms the view of the proper relationship of principals to teachers as one of an empowering nature. Teachers who are subjected to close monitoring are not likely to give extra effort to the school. Commitment is given freely by teachers in a school in which the principal helps the teachers do their job (Tarter et al., 1989). Teachers can and will take greater responsibility toward meeting the school's goals if such behavior is encouraged. Blase (2000) investigated the control and protectionist politics of principals and their negative impact on teachers' classroom and schoolwide performances. Also researched was the practice of ideological control by school principals that severely limited teacher participation in the organization's processes (Blase & Roberts, 1994). The principal who overcontrols will likely frustrate staff initiative and reduce commitment (Tarter et al., 1989).

Just as students need autonomy-oriented classrooms to be intrinsically motivated and to perceive themselves as competent, teachers need to be intrinsically motivated. To perceive themselves as competent, teachers need an autonomy-oriented context within which they benefit from feedback about their

own teaching abilities (Deci et al., 1981). A lack of cohesiveness of teachers may be the result of controlling and rigid beliefs of the principals (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Directive principals can move towards being more supportive with individual innovation through the use of “simultaneous loose-tight properties.” The staff should identify a few key central values that give direction to their instruction and daily decisions. The principal then needs to demand rigid adherence to the few non-negotiable values from all staff members. This will promote and encourage individual autonomy in daily operations (Dufour, 1985).

A directive principal who avoids addressing basic organizational issues and resorts to either/or thinking limits the possibilities of the school’s potential. Principals need to replace hard versus soft behavior with reflective practices that cope with new ideas, confront important issues, and care for individual teachers and students (Tarter et al., 1989). Principals who treat teachers as professionals, who do not use authoritarian practices, and who “go to bat” for their teachers are likely to create a positive school climate, one in which leadership acts flow freely from both teachers and principals. Teachers have reported that when principals were inaccessible, failed to support teachers, and exhibited favoritism, discussion, debate, and decision making were distorted and undermined (Blase, 2001). Teachers who are subjected to close monitoring are not likely to give extra effort to the school. Commitment is given freely by

teachers in a school in which the principal helps the teachers do their job (Tarter et al., 1989).

In schools that have been most successful in creating a professional learning community, principals have focused on posing questions rather than dictating solutions (Dufour, 1999). According to Saphier and King (1985), effective schools are characterized first by a sense of collegiality, which is difficult to establish, foster, and maintain in a bureaucracy.

Restrictive Behavior

Hoy and Clover (1986, p. 101) defined restrictive behavior as “principal behavior that hinders rather than facilitates teacher work.” The restrictive principal burdens teachers with paper work, committee requirements, routine duties, and other demands that interfere with their teaching responsibilities.

Restrictive principals do not create conditions in which teachers can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts towards the success of the school. Principals have little to do with the contracts that are made between teachers and the district, but they do have control over some of the elements. The principal who is able to influence superiors for the benefit of teachers is perceived as a principal who brings additional rewards to the teachers from the district (Hoy & Woodfolk, 1993). The principal certifies the contributions that staff members make; and when the central administration rewards those teachers, the principal is seen as the effective source of the new allotments (Tarter et al., 1989). If teachers view the principal and school community as sharing their

values, it leads them to want to be a part of the organization. As a result, teachers will increase their commitment to the school by putting extra effort into their jobs.

Resource allocation has proven to be necessary for students to achieve academic success. The restrictive principal does not take the time to take care of this for the teachers, but the principal's role is central to that acquisition (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Hoy et al., 1990; Hoy et al., 2001). Whether it is finding the necessary materials or developing opportunities to send teachers to professional growth opportunities to enhance their teaching abilities, the principal is responsible for acquiring the means that will establish a school climate that has a strong drive to have all students succeed (Conner & Krajewski, 1996; Hoy et al., 1990; Neuman & Simmons, 2000).

Professional work in a school setting cannot be controlled in a top-down manner, and attempts at such control are met with resistance by teachers as they are assigned to committees and supervisory activities rather than serving the needs of their students (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Mintzberg, 1979).

Formalization in schools is typically related to negative consequences (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2002). Research has shown the greater the degree of perceived trust in a school, the stronger the belief in the teacher's ability to organize and execute instruction that will lead to success (Hoy & Tschannen, 1999).

Teachers will not commit and sustain the investment of time, energy, risk-taking, numerous meetings, inconvenience, and intrusion on their classrooms and personal lives if their work goes unnoticed, unrecognized, or unvalued by restrictive principals (Barth, 2001). It is just as important for principals to recognize teachers' successes as it is for them to share failure.

Restrictive principals do not make their own questioning of why things work or do not work in the school visible and tend to focus on the school's daily management functions. Without a sense of control over their own learning, teachers become oblivious to the ways in which conditions make it difficult or impossible to do the work that they are expected to do (Elmore, 2002). Teachers responded in an American Association of School Administrators survey in 1982 with their reasons for having a low level of morale to be an inadequate salary, unresponsive or uncooperative principals, the lowly tasks attached to teaching, and the lack of public regard for education and teachers in the United States (Brodinsky, 1993).

Principals who are strong are able to stand up for their beliefs, buffer their staff members from outside criticism or disagreement, and their views permeate the school climate (Villani, 2000). Authentic leaders attempt to do what is right regardless of the consequences (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997). Principals who can improve the setting of the classroom by influencing the larger social system earn the commitment of the teachers, and the result is teacher commitment in doing extra work, sharing the goals of the school, and developing a sense of pride in

the school (Tarter et al., 1989). The degree to which teachers feel that they are protected from hostile or unreasonable demands from outside the school is directly related to the degree to which the principal is able to deflect those demands (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Neuman & Simmons, 2000). In order to maintain an educational focus, teachers must be able to perform their jobs without undue interference (Hoy & Hannum, 1997).

Teachers also need protection from the bureaucratic demands and burdens that are found in any kind of organization. As an administrator in that organization, the principal's role is to ensure that teachers will have "reasonable autonomy" as they work with students (Sweeney, 1992). In order to facilitate a community of leaders, principals must empower teachers, students, and parents on behalf of the school's mission; provide the support and resources they need to function autonomously; and remove the bureaucratic obstacles from their way (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 151.)

Principal Openness

Hoy and Tarter (1997, p. 16) defined openness in principal behavior to be marked by "a genuine concern for the ideas of teachers (high supportiveness), freedom and encouragement for teachers to experiment and act independently (low directiveness), and structuring the routine aspects of the job so that they do not interfere with teaching (low restrictiveness)." The characteristics of principal openness include listening to and being receptive to teacher ideas, giving

genuine and frequent praise, and respecting the competence of staff members (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). Open principals also give their teachers independence to perform without close supervision and provide facilitating leadership without bureaucratic tendencies.

Shared governance is a strategy that open principals utilize. The open principal is an instructional leader who establishes rules, policies, and procedures that are clear, well understood, and implemented by staff. Stein and King (1992) claimed that principals must realize that the best way to reach a school's goals is to be willing to delegate power and responsibility to others. A vision that is shared by the principal, community, staff, and students creates an atmosphere of professionalism. Teachers who feel empowered individualize instruction to reach all students through communication and collaboration, and there are high expectations for student achievement (Borkan et al., 2003; Pashiardis, 2000).

Principal trust and credibility have been found to be highest in schools where principals believe in shared leadership and expertise (Short, 1998). Sandra Harris (2000) found that teachers value principal behaviors such as treating teachers professionally and involving them in decision-making; supporting behaviors, such as providing emotional and moral support and being visible during the school day; and communicating behaviors such as active listening, providing encouragement, and establishing clear expectations.

When principals offer teachers help, support, and recognition, the staff develops a greater sense of unity and cooperation (Newmann et al., 1989). It makes sense as well that principals respond more positively to cohesive, cooperative teaching staffs. Principals cannot positively affect either teachers or the organizational climate of the school unless they interact frequently with the teachers (Zielinski & Hoy, 1983).

Leadership involves getting things done through people. Working through people involves the communication, teambuilding, and motivational skills that open principals utilize (Krug, 1993). When staff members have a sense of efficacy and an ability to influence their workplace, they seek to be productive. They choose to direct their energy and intelligence toward making a contribution rather than standing in the way of progress (Bolman & Deal, 2002).

Healthy school climates share characteristics commonly found in climates established by open principals: an orderly and serious environment, visible rewards for academic achievement, influential principals who match their behavior to fit the situation, openness in behavior, and a cohesive working team based upon mutual trust (Hoy & Feldman, 1987). Principals who are open earn the loyalty of others not by coercion but by building trusting relationships. Open principals are aware of their own limitations; are tolerant of imperfection in others; and help others learn, grow, mature, and succeed (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). Roland Barth (2001, p.105) stated the importance of principal openness as follows: "I have found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than

healthy teacher-principal relationships—and no characteristic of a troubled school more common than troubled, embattled, or antiseptic administrator-teacher relationships.”

Principal Closedness

Characteristics teachers associate with closed principals include authoritativeness, inaccessibility, unsupportiveness, inequity, inconsistency, indecisiveness, ambiguity with regard to expectations, egocentricity, unfriendliness, and aggressiveness (Blase, 1991; Kirby & Blase, 1991). A closed principal does not communicate openly with staff members but rather dictates what he or she wants done and maintains control over all aspects of the school organization (Hoy et al., 1990). As a result, the school climate may suffer due to teacher frustration and apathy as well as by suspicion and a lack of faculty respect for colleagues as well as for administrators.

Teachers purposely limit their interactions with closed principals; and because those principals rarely seek or expect support, teachers are willing to give little in exchange with them. When necessary, teachers offer their support, loyalty, or extra effort only in exchange for supplies or permission to try new strategies. Teachers in these circumstances do not volunteer for extra duties or responsibilities and use avoidance tactics to maintain autonomy in the classroom. Many feel if they dared to risk contact with the closed principal that it might result in the imposition of restraints. Teachers tend to react to principals

they perceive as being closed by putting up obstacles to communication.

Teachers' feelings toward closed principals may prevent the communication and collaboration towards a school-wide vision that could be used as an active force in school improvement (Blase, 1991; Kirby & Blase, 1991).

Teachers who do not have the opportunity to assist in school decision-making and are not made to feel valued develop negative feelings resulting in stress (LoVette et al., 2000; McConaghy, 1993). Principals who create a climate of teacher empowerment will find that the greatest impact on student achievement occurs when the focus of that empowerment is on teaching and learning (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000).

Principals with critical, admonishing, or uncertain interactive styles negatively affect teachers and general morale (Cresswell & Fisher, 1996). How a principal or a staff really behaves is less important than how its members perceive it. It is their perceptions of behavior that motivate action (Hoy & Tarter, 1991).

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

The methodology and procedures for conducting the study are presented in Chapter 3. The methodology of the study includes the following: (a) review of selected literature, (b) description of the population and sample that was studied, (c) instrumentation, (d) data collection, and (e) data analysis.

The purpose of this study was to determine what relationship exists between teachers' assessment of school climate and the number of years teachers have worked with an elementary school administrator in several midwestern elementary schools. The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
2. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
4. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

5. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?

6. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

7. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?

8. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

9. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

10. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?

11. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?

12. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?

Review of Related Literature

A selective review of related literature was conducted. The following resources were used in the search through the I. D. Weeks Library at The University of South Dakota, Vermillion, and by interlibrary loan: the *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)*, *Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI)*, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), the *Education Index*, and the Internet. The publication guidelines referenced in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition* (2001) were used in the completion of this paper.

Informed Consent

The researcher requested and was granted permission for the study from The University of South Dakota Institutional Review Board: Human Subjects. This study involved approximately 151 elementary school teachers who completed the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE)*, a school climate assessment instrument (Appendix A). Permission was obtained from Wayne Hoy to use the *OCDQ-RE* for this study and is included in Appendix B. Permission was also obtained from the assistant superintendent of the Kearney Public School District before research was conducted (Appendix C). Principals at the Kearney Public elementary schools were sent letters asking for their support and a copy of the survey that was used (Appendix D). Teachers participating in the study received a letter that explained the study's purpose as well as solicited their participation (Appendix E).

Population Selection

The study was conducted in the midwestern community of Kearney, Nebraska, with a population of approximately 28,000. The Kearney Public School District has nine elementary schools which serve students in grades kindergarten through fifth, two middle schools which serve students in grades sixth through eighth, and one high school which serves students in grades ninth through twelfth. The overall K-12 student population is approximately 4,600 students with approximately 1,920 elementary students. The elementary teachers who participated in this study were teachers of kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, or fifth graders. The population was 151 elementary school teachers working in the Kearney Public School District at nine elementary schools. All the teachers from each elementary school within the district were invited to voluntarily complete the survey.

Instrumentation

All teachers were invited to complete the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE)*, a school climate assessment instrument. Materials distributed to the survey participants included the 42 item *OCDQ-RE* and a letter requesting their participation that contained information about the purpose of this study. Respondents completed the survey at grade-level meetings held at designated school sites by circling their responses on the survey instrument and returned it to the researcher through an envelope that was provided at each grade-level meeting. The administrative

representative sealed the envelope and sent it to the researcher through the district mail system. If a teacher was absent from the grade-level meeting, a survey and letter were sent to him/her through the school mail, along with a labeled return envelope. When all nine envelopes from the grade-level meetings were returned to the researcher, the surveys were tabulated and analyzed.

The *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE)* was developed by Wayne K. Hoy of The Ohio State University. A letter requesting Hoy's permission for use of the *OCDQ-RE* was sent to him (Appendix F), and his positive response is included as Appendix B. Teachers completed each of the 42 items on the instrument by selecting their responses from a four-point Likert scale. The responses on the Likert scale included *rarely occurs*, *sometimes occurs*, *often occurs*, and *very frequently occurs*. The respondents were asked to describe the extent to which specific behavior patterns occurred in their school. The teacher was asked to select the response that most accurately reflected his or her assessment of the situation presented.

As part of the scoring process, teacher responses to the items on the *OCDQ-RE* were placed into one of three dimensions of principal behavior: supportive principal behavior (items 4, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 28, 29, and 42), directive principal behavior (items 5, 10, 17, 24, 30, 34, 35, 39, and 41), and restrictive principal behavior (items 11, 18, 25, 31, and 36). Instrument reliability as determined by Hoy and his associates at The Ohio State University for each of

those dimensions is supportive (.94), directive (.88), and restrictive (.81). The degree of openness in principal-teacher relations was computed by standardizing the school scores for each interval of years of worked with an elementary school principal on each of the dimensions, and then subtracting the sum of the directive and restrictive scores from the supportive score (supportive – {directive + restrictive} = openness). The construct validity of each dimension of openness was supported by correlating each dimension with the original *OCDQ* of openness (Hoy, 2004).

Data Collection

To assure anonymity of respondents, no identifying codes or marks were placed on the survey instruments; therefore, no follow-up data collection was planned. Data collection took place during April 2005.

The principal from each elementary building, the district assessment director, and the special education director were contacted to secure cooperation and to discuss information that would be shared at their designated grade-level meetings. During the grade-level meetings, the administrative representative explained the purpose of the survey, asked for voluntary participation, and distributed the teacher letters and climate surveys to the participating teachers. Once the survey was explained, the administrative representative asked those who completed the survey to return it to a large manila envelope that was provided at each meeting site. There were no identifying marks or codes on the envelopes. If any of the teachers were unwilling or unable to participate in the

study, the teacher was asked to return the unused survey to the envelope. The administrative representative sent the manila envelopes with the surveys to the researcher's school address. If any teachers were unable to attend the meeting, a letter, survey, and labeled return envelope was sent to them through the school mail system.

Once the surveys had been administered and returned, the responses to each item were tallied by hand. Following the directions given for scoring the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE)*, by Hoy and Associates, the respondent's average school score was obtained for each of the 42 items on the survey. When the average school score was determined for each item, the scores for the items relating to each of the dimensions was calculated. The three subtests of the *OCDQ-RE* that define principal openness are supportive, directive, and restrictive. A correlation between the studied dimensions of leadership behavior: supportive, directive, restrictive; principal openness; years of teaching experience; and years of working of with an elementary school administrator were calculated based on the intervals of 1-4 years, 5-10 years, and 11 or more years.

Data Analysis

Data collected from completed survey instruments were tabulated and analyzed to respond to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The study utilized the survey results from the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools* to determine teachers' perceptions of

school climate and an overall composite in the following principal behavior dimensions: supportive behavior, directive behavior, and restrictive behavior based on the intervals of years worked with an elementary school administrator and total years of teaching experience of 1-4 years, 5-10 years, and 11 or more years. In addition to the three dimensions, an underlying general aspect of school climate was identified, openness in principal behavior based on the intervals of years worked with an elementary school administrator.

These data were reported as a composite mean for the *OCDQ-RE* based on the intervals of years worked with an elementary school administrator and years of teaching experience, as well as in each of the three dimensions of the *OCDQ-RE*. These means and the degree of principal openness were based on the individual teachers' number of years they had worked with an elementary school administrator and years of teaching experience. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine if a significant difference existed in the mean scores based on the number of years a teacher had worked with an elementary school administrator and years of teaching experience.

Question 1: What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between the overall composite mean of school climate and the number of years teachers had worked with their current elementary school administrator.

Question 2: What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary school administrator? A one-way ANOVA was used to determine significant differences. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the overall composite mean of school climate.

Question 3: What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between the composite mean score of supportive principal behavior and the number of years teachers had worked with their current elementary school administrator.

Question 4: What differences exist in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator? A one-way ANOVA was used to determine significant differences. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of supportive principal behavior.

Question 5: What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between the composite mean score of directive

principal behavior and the number of years teachers had worked with their current elementary school administrator.

Question 6: What differences exist in teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator? A one-way ANOVA was used to determine significant differences. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of directive principal behavior.

Question 7: What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between the composite mean score of restrictive principal behavior and the number of years teachers had worked with their current elementary school administrator.

Question 8: What differences exist in teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator? A one-way ANOVA was used to determine significant differences. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of restrictive principal behavior.

Question 9: What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school

administrator? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between the composite mean score of principals' openness and overall climate based upon the number of years teachers had worked with their current elementary school administrator.

Question 10: What differences exist in teachers' assessment of principals' openness and based on years worked with an elementary school administrator? A one-way ANOVA was used to determine significant differences. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of principal openness and the overall climate score.

Question 11: What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years of teaching experience? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to determine the relationship between the number of years of teaching experience and the overall composite mean of school climate.

Question 12: What differences exist between teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years of teaching experience? A one-way ANOVA was used to determine significant differences. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years of teaching experience and the dependent variable was the overall composite mean of school climate.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Analysis of Data

Chapter 4 consists of the results obtained from the survey instrument and an analysis of the data. Following a discussion of the demographic characteristics of the sample, descriptive (differences of means) and inferential (Pearson product-moment correlations and one-way analysis of variance) statistics are presented for each research question. All results are presented in tabular form and are accompanied by a brief narrative.

The purpose of this study was to determine what relationship existed between teachers' assessment of school climate and the number of years teachers had worked with an elementary school administrator in several midwestern elementary schools.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
2. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?

4. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
5. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
6. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
7. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
8. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
9. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
10. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
11. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?
12. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?

Response Rate

All elementary teachers of children in kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades in the Kearney Public School District, Kearney, Nebraska, were invited to participate in the study. A total of 151 surveys were delivered to teachers at grade-level meetings in the district. A total of 132 usable surveys were returned, for a response rate of 87.4%. Four additional surveys were returned but the demographics were not completed, so they were not included in the data. There was no follow-up letter for the return of the surveys.

Demographic Data of Survey Respondents

Survey responses were grouped first by the number of years worked with an elementary administrator based on the intervals of 1-4 years, 5-10 years, and 11 or more years, and secondly by the total number of years teaching experience based on the interval years of 1-4 years, 5-10 years, and 11 or more years. Results of that data are included in Table 1.

Surveys were distributed at nine different grade-level meetings. Nine elementary schools were included in the study.

Table 1

Demographic Groupings

Interval of Years	Number of Respondents			
	Yrs. Worked W/Adm.		Yrs. Tchg. Exp.	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1-4 years	61	46.2	15	11.4
5-10 years	57	43.2	29	22.0
11 or more years	14	10.6	88	66.6
Total	132	100.0	132	100.0

*Results of Data Analysis**Relationship Between Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator*

The results of the Pearson product-moment test used to measure the degree of correlation between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary administrator (Research Question 1) are summarized in Table 2. The obtained correlation coefficient of $-.113$ for elementary teachers was not statistically significant; therefore, no statistically

significant relationship was observed between teacher's overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary administrator, $r(132)=-.113$, $p=.196$.

Table 2

Relationship between Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

<i>n</i>	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
132	-.113	.196

Differences in Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate Based On Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the one-way ANOVA used to determine significant differences in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator (Research Question 2) are summarized in Table 3. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the overall composite mean of school climate. Results of the one-way analysis of variance did not indicate a significant difference in the overall

composite mean of school climate based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator, $F(2,129)=.166$, $p=.847$.

Table 3

Differences in Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

Interval Years	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1-4 years	62	2.5603	.25333		
5-10 years	55	2.4900	.26831		
11 or more years	15	2.4476	.26910		
Total	132	2.5182	.26275	1.66	.847

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Supportive Principal Behavior and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the Pearson product-moment test used to measure the degree of correlation between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary administrator (Research Question 3) are summarized in Table 4. The obtained correlation coefficient of $-.224$ for

elementary teachers was statistically significant. A statistically significant negative relationship was observed between teacher's assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary administrator, $r(132) = -.224, p = .010$.

Table 4

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Supportive Principal Behavior and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

<i>n</i>	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
132	-.224	.010*

* denotes significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed.)

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Supportive Principal Behavior Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the one-way ANOVA used to determine significant differences in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator (Research Question 4) are summarized in Table 5. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of supportive principal behavior. Results of the one-way analysis of variance did not indicate a

significant difference in the overall composite mean of supportive principal behavior based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator, $F(2,129)=.552, p=.577$.

Table 5

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Supportive Principal Behavior Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

Interval Years	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1-4 years	62	3.225	.72750		
5-10 years	55	2.9697	.61585		
11 or more years	15	2.8667	.66295		
Total	132	3.0673	.68339	.552	.577

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Directive Principal Behavior and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the Pearson product-moment test used to measure the degree of correlation between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary administrator (Research Question 5) are summarized in Table 6. The obtained correlation coefficient of $-.043$ for elementary teachers was not statistically significant, and no statistically

significant relationship was observed between teacher's assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary administrator, $r(132) = -.043, p = .624$.

Table 6

Relationship in Teachers' Assessment of Directive Principal Behavior and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

<i>n</i>	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
132	-.043	.624

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Directive Principal Behavior Based on Years worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the one-way ANOVA used to determine significant differences in teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator (Research Question 6) are summarized in Table 7. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of directive principal behavior. Results of the one-way analysis of variance did not indicate a significant difference in the overall composite mean of directive principal behavior based

upon years worked with an elementary school administrator, $F(2,129)=2.069$, $p=.131$.

Table 7

Differences between Teachers' Assessment of Directive Principal Behavior Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

Interval Years	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i>	
1-4 years	62	1.9624	.44578		
5-10 years	55	1.9556	.41935		
11 or more years	15	1.8000	.49191		
Total	132	1.9411	.43985	2.069	.131

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Restrictive Principal Behavior and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the Pearson product-moment test used to measure the degree of correlation between teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary administrator (Research Question 7) are summarized in Table 8. The obtained correlation coefficient of .132 for elementary teachers was not statistically significant, and no statistically significant relationship was observed between teacher's assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary administrator, $r(132)=$

-.132, $p=.132$.

Table 8

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Restrictive Principal Behavior and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

<i>n</i>	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
132	.132	.132

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Restrictive Principal Behavior Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the one-way ANOVA used to determine significant differences in teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator (Research Question 8) are summarized in Table 9. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of restrictive principal behavior. Results of the one-way analysis of variance did not indicate a significant difference in the overall composite mean of restrictive principal behavior based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator, $F(2,129)=2.505$, $p=.086$.

Table 9

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Restrictive Principal Behavior Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

Interval Years	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1-4 years	62	2.3645	.47012		
5-10 years	55	2.5745	.43556		
11 or more years	15	2.5200	.70020		
Total	132	2.4697	.49361	2.505	.086

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Principal Openness and Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the Pearson product-moment test used to measure the degree of correlation between teachers' assessment of principal openness and years worked with an elementary administrator (Research Question 9) are summarized in Table 10. The obtained correlation coefficient of $-.187$ for elementary teachers was statistically significant, and a statistically significant negative relationship was observed between teacher's assessment of principal openness and years worked with an elementary administrator, $r(132)=-.187$, $p=.032$.

Table 10

Relationship between Teachers' Assessment of Principal Openness Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

<i>n</i>	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
132	-.187	.032*

*denotes a significant correlation at the 0.05 level (2-tailed.)

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Principal Openness Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

The results of the one-way ANOVA used to determine significant differences in teachers' assessment of principal openness and years worked with an elementary school administrator (Research Question 10) are summarized in Table 11. The independent variable was the grouping based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator and the dependent variable was the teachers' composite mean score of principal openness. Results of the one-way analysis of variance did not indicate a significant difference in the overall composite mean of principal openness based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator, $F(2,129)=.150, p=.861$.

Table 11

Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Principal Openness Based on Years Worked with an Elementary School Administrator

Interval Years	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1-4 years	62	-1.1244	1.07820		
5-10 years	55	-1.5604	1.01330		
11 or more years	15	-1.4533	1.09875		
Total	132	-1.3434	1.06652	.150	.861

Relationship between Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate and Years of Teaching Experience

The results of the Pearson product-moment test used to measure the degree of correlation between teachers' years of teaching experience and overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary administrator (Research Question 11) are summarized in Table 12. The obtained correlation coefficient of $-.003$ for elementary teachers was not statistically significant, and no statistically significant relationship was observed between teacher's years of teaching experience and overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary administrator, $r(132) = -.003, p = .969$.

Table 12

Relationship between Teachers' Years Overall Assessment of School Climate Based on Years of Teaching Experience

<i>n</i>	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
132	-.003	.969

Differences in Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate Based On Years of Teaching Experience

The results of the one-way ANOVA used to determine significant differences in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years of teaching experience (Research Question 12) are summarized in Table 13. The independent variable was the total years of teaching experience and the dependent variable was the overall composite mean score of teachers' assessment of school climate. Results of the one-way analysis of variance did not indicate a significant difference in the overall composite mean of teachers' assessment of school climate based upon years worked with an elementary school administrator, $F(2,129)=1.669$, $p=.192$.

Table 13

Differences in Teachers' Overall Assessment of School Climate Based On Years of Teaching Experience

Interval Years	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1-4 years	62	2.5000	.19941		
5-10 years	55	2.4992	.27091		
11 or more years	15	2.5276	.27142		
Total	132	2.5182	.26275	1.669	.192

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine what relationship existed between teachers' assessment of school climate and the number of years worked with an elementary school administrator in public elementary schools located in a Midwestern district. The study was guided by 12 research questions. Assessment of school climate data obtained from a sample of elementary teachers was compared to interval groupings of years worked with an elementary administrator. Inferential statistics, using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs), were used to determine if any of the obtained results had statistical significance. Descriptive

analyses were used to compare the results obtained by the three levels (1-4 years, 5-10 years, 11 or more years) of the population.

There were two statistically significant correlations found in this study. There was a negative correlation between the number of years worked with an elementary administrator and perceived supportive principal behaviors. Another statistically significant correlation was a negative correlation between the number of years worked with an elementary administrator and perceived principal openness.

There were no statistically significant relationships between or differences in teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator. This finding was also true for relationships and differences on directive and restrictive principal behaviors and years worked with an elementary administrator. There were no significant relationships between or differences in teachers' years of teaching experience and overall assessment of school climate.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations

Included in Chapter 5 are a summary of the research questions that guided the study, a review of the related literature, the methods and procedures used in the research, a summary of the results obtained from the study, and the conclusions and discussion derived from the findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practice and for further study based on the results obtained from this study.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what relationship existed between teachers' assessment of school climate and the number of years teachers had worked with an elementary school administrator in several midwestern elementary schools.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
2. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?

4. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
5. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
6. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
7. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator?
8. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of restrictive principal behavior based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
9. What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
10. What differences exist in teachers' assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator?
11. What is the relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?
12. What differences exist in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on their years of teaching experience?

Review of Related Literature

The intent of the review of related literature was to develop a definition of school climate and to facilitate an investigation into the relationship between school climate and the number of years worked with an elementary administrator. The concept of school climate was discussed from a variety of dimensions, including climate as the personality of the school, climate as the shared values of the staff of a school, climate as the culture of a school, and climate as the environment of a school community. Common to all definitions is the underlying concept that climate is unique to each building. Individual reactions to perceptions of school climate, both individually and as part of a group, determine the significance of the climate to the organization. The school culture or climate represents the accumulated learning of a group; the ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world that have made the group successful or unsuccessful (Schein, 1999).

The building principal's role in developing school climate was the topic of the second section of the literature review. The role of the principal is critical in establishing a positive learning environment. A positive school culture will enhance school effectiveness, productivity, and student achievement. In addition to establishing a focus on student achievement, the building principal also is primarily responsible for communicating a vision to all of the shareholders in the school community. A principal's decision to focus on school climate must be conscious and continuous. Saphier and King (1985) have suggested 12 norms

of school culture that impact school improvement: collegiality, experimentation; high expectations; trust and confidence; tangible support; reaching out to the knowledge base; appreciation and recognition; caring, celebration and humor; shared decision making; protection of what's important; traditions; and honest, open communication (p. 67).

In addition to creating a climate that emphasizes achievement, the principal also must create a climate that is nurturing and safe. It is essential that the climate be warm and caring if students are to reach their full potential. Key to developing a positive school climate is the ability of the building principal to establish meaningful relationships with staff, students, parents, and community members. Bryk and Schneider (2002) provided data that correlated the trust in a school with its student achievement. They found that in schools where trust was high between faculty members, parents, and administrators, achievement was higher than in schools with low levels of trust, even controlling for the factors like poverty and student mobility.

The final section of the literature review discussed the relationship between five dimensions that comprised the survey: supportive principal behavior, directive principal behavior, restrictive principal behavior, principal openness, and principal closedness. Supportive principal behavior, which describes how a principal shows concern for teachers, may be most directly related to how positively a staff perceives its principal. Supportive principals exhibit a personal and professional interest in the well-being of their teachers. In

addition, they establish healthy interpersonal relationships with school community members and shareholders. The supportive principal provides teachers with the right combination of pressure to improve, along with the support needed for school-wide and individual growth.

Directive principal behavior describes behavior that is rigid and involves close monitoring of teacher activities. Directive principals tend to rely on hierarchical authority more than interpersonal relations and have a difficult time sharing responsibilities within the school. Because directive principals do not like to relinquish control, many teachers working with them feel as if the principal does not trust them. A directive principal is perceived by staff as working to improve the school from the top down. A focus of directive principals is more on student achievement than on genuine interactions with teachers, and as a result, the commitment of teachers to the schools is lessened.

Restrictive principal behavior describes behavior that hinders teachers rather than facilitates teacher work. The restrictive principal burdens teachers with paper work, committee requirements, routine duties, and other demands that interfere with their teaching responsibilities. The restrictive principal does not seek out resources or opportunities for teachers to be empowered. Instead, the directive principal tends to focus on the school's daily management functions over the vision of the school. Teachers who have felt restricted by their principals are not likely to give extra effort to the school. Restrictive principals

tend to dictate solutions rather than pose questions to provide a sense of collegiality.

The next dimension that was discussed, principal openness, is characterized by a genuine concern for the ideas of teachers, empowerment for teachers to act independently, and the structuring of the day-to-day functions of the job so that they do not interfere with teaching. Principals who are open listen to and accept teacher ideas, give frequent praise, and respect the professionalism of the teachers they work with. Persell and Cookson (1982), in their review of research on effective principals, found “a recurrent characteristic of successful schools concerns the amount of respect shown to all participants” (p. 23). Shared governance is a strategy that open principals utilize, and they give their teachers independence to teach without close supervision. Healthy school climates share characteristics that are commonly found in climates established by open principals: a safe environment, rewards for academic achievement, openness in behavior, and a cohesive staff that mutually trusts one another.

The final dimension of school climate included in the review of literature was principal closedness. Characteristics teachers associate with closed principals include authoritativeness, inaccessibility, inconsistency, indecisiveness, unfriendliness, and aggressiveness. A closed principal does not communicate openly with staff members but rather dictates what he or she wants done. School climate may suffer under the direction of a closed principal due to

teacher frustration. Teachers purposely limit their interactions with closed principals; and because those principals rarely seek or expect support, teachers are willing to give little in exchange with them.

Methodology

The target population for this study consisted of all of the certified elementary school teachers of the Kearney, Nebraska, school district. A total of 151 teachers received the climate surveys. Each building principal was solicited for participation, and an administrative representative was asked to distribute the surveys at scheduled grade-level meetings. Of the 151 surveys distributed to elementary teachers, 132 were returned, for a response rate of 87.4%.

Survey participants were given a copy of the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools*, a school climate survey developed by Dr. Wayne K. Hoy. In addition to the survey and letter explaining the study's intent, teachers who were absent from the grade-level meetings were mailed a labeled return envelope. Surveys did not include any identifying marks or codes.

The *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools* is a measure of school climate that consists of 42 items. Participants were asked to respond to a statement for each item. Response choices included 1, *rarely occurs*; 2, *sometimes occurs*; 3, *often occurs*; and 4, *very frequently occurs*.

Each survey was tallied by hand. Once all the surveys had been entered according to the interval years (1-4 years, 5-10 years, 11 or more years), the items were grouped according to the dimensions of leadership behaviors (supportive, directive, and restrictive) and were given an overall climate score. The obtained climate results for each interval group were correlated to the dimensions of leadership behaviors.

The information obtained from the surveys was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson product-moment correlations and one-way analyses of variance.) These analyses were used to answer each of the 12 research questions posed in the original research proposal. The research questions explored the relationship and differences between teachers' assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary administrator in each of the dimensions discussed earlier, as well as the relationships between and differences in teachers' overall assessment of school climate and total number of years of teaching experience.

Research Findings

This study's primary purpose was to explore the relationship between teachers' assessment of school climate and the number of years worked with an elementary administrator. Teacher assessment of school climate in general and in each of the three dimensions of leadership behavior (supportive, directive, and restrictive) was correlated to years worked with an elementary administrator. Additionally, the study investigated whether differences existed in teacher

assessment of school climate based upon total number of years of teaching experience. Twelve research questions guided the study. The major findings related to the research questions are as follows:

1. The relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years worked with an elementary school administrator was not found to be statistically significant.

2. No statistical difference was found in teachers' overall assessment of school climate based on years worked with an elementary school administrator.

3. The relationship between teachers' assessment of supportive principal behaviors and years worked with an elementary school administrator was found to have a negative correlation. As the number of years worked with an elementary school principal increased, the amount of perceived supportive principal behavior decreased.

4. No statistical difference was found in teachers' assessment of supportive principal behaviors based on years worked with an elementary school administrator.

5. The relationship between teachers' assessment of directive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator was not found to be statistically significant.

6. No statistical difference was found in teachers' assessment of directive principal behaviors based on years worked with an elementary school administrator.

7. The relationship between teachers' overall assessment of restrictive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary school administrator was not found to be statistically significant.

8. No statistical difference was found in teachers' assessment of restrictive leadership behaviors based on years worked with an elementary school administrator.

9. The relationship between teachers' overall assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator was found to have a negative correlation. As the number of years worked with an elementary school principal increased, the perceived amount of principal openness decreased.

10. No statistical difference was found in teachers' overall assessment of principals' openness based on years worked with an elementary school administrator.

11. The relationship between teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years of teaching experience and was not found to be statistically significant.

12. No statistical difference was found in teachers' overall assessment of school climate and years of teaching experience.

Conclusions

Based on the analyses of data contained in this study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Years of association between a teacher and an elementary school administrator in the same elementary school have little relationship to teachers' perceptions of school climate. This trend seems evident as well based on the total number of years of teaching experience.

2. The longer elementary teachers work with an elementary school administrator, the less supportive they view the administrator's behavior. Elementary teachers share similar perceptions of supportive principal behaviors regardless of the total number of years of teaching experience.

3. Elementary teachers share similar perceptions of directive principal behaviors regardless of number of years worked with an elementary school administrator or total number of years of teaching experience.

4. Elementary teachers share similar perceptions of restrictive principal behaviors regardless of number of years worked with an elementary school administrator or total number of years of teaching experience.

5. The longer elementary teachers work with an elementary school administrator, the less open they view the principal's behavior. Elementary teachers share similar perceptions of principal openness regardless of the total number of years of teaching experience.

Discussion

The results of this study would seem to indicate that principals who are hoping to create a positive school climate should not be concerned with the number of years they have worked at a particular school setting. It may be valuable to examine the significant characteristics of this study that impacted the obtained results. Without knowing the degree that such a study is enhanced or limited by the homogeneity of the sample, the entire population selected for this study was from one Midwestern school district. As a result, it is likely that the respondents experienced school climates that were more alike than different. Although there were variations obtained among the interval groups of years worked with an elementary principal and years of teaching experience (1-4 years, 5-10 years, and 11 or more years) on overall climate, the differences were not significant. What remained were the perceptions of elementary teachers who are employed by the same school district. The majority of teachers who responded to the survey are also themselves products of educational systems that are similar to the one in which they work. For the most part, teachers in the participating district are from the Midwest themselves and have lived in the area most of their lives. Aside from the expected differences in age, gender, and supervising principals, this study's population is more alike than different.

Although principal behaviors were not studied individually and by each elementary school, the same conclusions can be drawn about the elementary principals of the schools involved in the study. They too are a largely

homogeneous group. Most of them were previously teachers in the Midwest. It seems evident that they hold common beliefs in how they work with their staffs to establish positive school climates in their buildings. It is also evident that each school has a heterogeneous mix of teachers that have worked with the elementary administrator at each site.

Had the study not been limited to the schools in one district, the obtained results might have been different. Because of the small number of teachers included in the survey, the necessary levels of differences and correlations needed for significance was extremely high. A larger sample might have yielded different results.

When this study's results are considered in light of the review of the research literature on school climate, different conclusions might be drawn than the ones obtained. There were no references in the research to the relationship between positive school climate and years worked with an elementary principal. What the research did show was that the relationships formed by the principal with individual teachers, and the impact they have on student achievement, are at the core of developing and maintaining a positive school climate (Blase & Kirby, 2000). Highly effective principals recognize the power inherent in building a community of leaders (McEwan, 2003). When the building principal involves the entire school in improving a poor school climate or maintaining a positive one, that involvement will happen most likely through developing positive one-to-one relationships (Sagor, 1992). Supportive principal behavior is reflective of

how the principal develops relationships with staff members and is a measure of how effectively the principal is able to communicate his or her vision (Hoy & Hannum, 1998).

This study's results indicate that there was a negative correlation between the number of years worked with an elementary administrator and perceived supportive principal behaviors. In other words as the number of years worked with an elementary principal increased, teachers perceived supportive principal behaviors to decrease. Perhaps elementary principals focus more attention on new staff members, so that those who have worked with the elementary principals for a greater number of years view the principal as not spending as much time with them. Therefore, they view the principal as being less supportive. Another possibility for this result could be that as the number of years working together increases between a teacher and principal, the elementary principal has more confidence in the teacher's ability and is less visible in the teacher's classroom. A teacher may view this as the principal being less accessible, therefore perceiving the principal as being less supportive.

Open principals listen to and are receptive to teacher ideas, give frequent and genuine praise, and respect the competence of staff members (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). When principals offer teachers help, support, and recognition, the staff develops a greater sense of unity and cooperation (Newmann et al., 1989). The highly effective principal is a communicator who is a genuine and open human being with the capacity to listen, empathize, interact, and connect with individual

students, parents, and teachers in productive, helping, and healing ways, as well as the ability to teach, present, and motivate people in larger group settings (McEwan, 2003.) This study obtained a negative correlation between the number of years worked with an elementary principal and perceived principal openness. This would seem to be in conjunction with the negative correlation of supportive principal behavior and years worked with an elementary principal, as the characteristics of an open principal are supportive in nature. Once again, teachers may perceive a principal as being less open due the amount of time a principal must invest with new staff members rather than with those who have been at the school a number of years. Another possibility could be that due to new No Child Left Behind Legislation, elementary principals must place more demands on teachers for accountability. Accountability includes an increase in paper work and record keeping, and some teachers may perceive this as the principals placing more emphasis on academic issues rather affective issues.

Because of the study's design, the results from individual schools and principals were not reported and instead were grouped by levels. While all of the groups assessed their overall school climate in a positive light (the range for overall climate was from a low of 2.4476 to a high of 2.5603 on a 1-4 scale), most had areas in which there was room for growth. As an elementary principal, the message is one of keeping constantly vigilant of the undercurrents that accompany a school's climate, whether positive or negative. Even though the majority of the results obtained from this study were not statistically significant,

the creation of a positive school climate appears to be a priority that principals must strive to achieve each and every school year.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of this study and on the review of literature conducted for it, principals interested in enhancing the climate in their elementary buildings would be well-advised to consider the following recommendations for practice:

1. Elementary principals should empower teachers to set high but achievable goals for themselves.
2. Central to establishing a positive school climate is creating an atmosphere in which teachers feel supported and cared for. Principals need to be open in their relationships with teachers and be open to listening to their thoughts, concerns, and ideas.
3. A recommendation to principals would be that they should practice supportive principal behaviors, rather than directive or restrictive behaviors, in order to create positive climates in their buildings.
4. Teachers, students, and community members should be offered the opportunity to complete climate assessments on a regular basis, and the results should be used to improve perceived deficiencies and build upon perceived strengths.

5. Principals must view their role of establishing school climate as a priority and work to ensure that every staff member feels part of the school community.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations for further study emerged from the findings and conclusions drawn from this study:

1. The study should be replicated with a larger sample of elementary teachers from several different school districts.
2. A study should be designed to measure the relationship between principal behaviors and student achievement to see if correlations exist.
3. A study should be designed to explore the relationship between principal openness and student achievement to see if a correlation exists.
4. A study should be designed to determine the relationship between principal behaviors, school climate, and student achievement.
5. A qualitative study should be conducted to determine how principals view their roles in establishing school climate.
6. A qualitative study should be conducted to determine superintendents' motivation for moving elementary principals to different school settings after a certain number of years.

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APPENDIX A

Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools

SECTION A

Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools
(OCDQ-RE)

DIRECTIONS: The following are statements about your school. Please indicate the extent to which each statement characterizes your school by circling the appropriate response.

RO=Rarely Occurs SO=Sometimes Occurs O=Often Occurs VFO=Very Frequently Occurs

1. The teachers accomplish their work with vim, vigor, and pleasureRO SO O VFO
2. Teachers' closest friends are other faculty members at this school.....RO SO O VFO
3. Faculty meetings are useless.....RO SO O VFO
4. The principal goes out of his/her way to help teachersRO SO O VFO
5. The principal rules with an iron fist.....RO SO O VFO
6. Teachers leave school immediately after school is over.....RO SO O VFO
7. Teachers invite faculty members to visit them at homeRO SO O VFO
8. There is a minority group of teachers who always oppose the majority.RO SO O VFO
9. The principal uses constructive criticismRO SO O VFO
10. The principal checks the sign-in sheet every morningRO SO O VFO
11. Routine duties interfere with the job of teachingRO SO O VFO
12. Most of the teachers here accept the faults of their colleagues.....RO SO O VFO
13. Teachers know the family background of other faculty membersRO SO O VFO
14. Teachers exert group pressure on non-conforming faculty members...RO SO O VFO
15. The principal explains his/her reasons for criticism to teachersRO SO O VFO
16. The principal listens to and accepts teachers' suggestionsRO SO O VFO
17. The principal schedules the work for the teachersRO SO O VFO
18. Teachers have too many committee requirementsRO SO O VFO
19. Teachers help and support each other.....RO SO O VFO
20. Teachers have fun socializing together during school timeRO SO O VFO

- | | | | | |
|--|----|----|---|-----|
| 21. Teachers ramble when they talk at faculty meetings..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 22. The principal looks out for the personal welfare of teachers..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 23. The principal treats teachers as equals..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 24. The principal corrects teachers' mistakes | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 25. Administrative paperwork is burdensome at this school | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 26. Teachers are proud of their school | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 27. Teachers have parties for each other | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 28. The principal compliments teachers | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 29. The principal is easy to understand | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 30. The principal closely checks classroom (teacher) activities..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 31. Clerical support reduces teachers' paperwork..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 32. New teachers are readily accepted by colleagues | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 33. Teachers socialize with each other on a regular basis..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 34. The principal supervises teachers closely..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 35. The principal checks lesson plans | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 36. Teachers are burdened with busy work..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 37. Teachers socialize together in small, select groups | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 38. Teachers provide strong social support for colleagues..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 39. The principal is autocratic..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 40. Teachers respect the professional competence of their colleagues | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 41. The principal monitors everything teachers do | RO | SO | O | VFO |
| 42. The principal goes out of his/her way to show appreciation to staff..... | RO | SO | O | VFO |

SECTION B

Total Number of Years You Have Worked with Your Current Principal:_____

Total Number of Years Teaching Experience:_____

APPENDIX B

Dr. Wayne Hoy's Permission to Use the OCDQ-RE

E-mail correspondence received from Dr. Wayne K. Hoy, January 19, 2005:

WayneHoy@AOL.com

Dear Ms. Wheelock:

You have my permission to the OCDQ-RE in your research. Simply download it, copy it, and use it. I ask only two things: first, give the appropriate citation, and second, send me a copy of your results.

Good luck with your study and best wishes.

Sincerely,

Wayne K. Hoy
Fawcett Professor of Educational Administration

APPENDIX C

Assistant Superintendent's Permission to Conduct Research in Schools

March 7, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

Please consider this a letter of approval for Melissa Wheelock, doctoral candidate, to conduct her research at Kearney Public Schools to complete her study titled "Teacher Assessment of School Climate and its Relationship to Years of Working with an Elementary School Administrator." Mrs. Wheelock may distribute the approved survey to Kearney Public Schools elementary teachers in grades kindergarten through five.

I have confidence that Melissa will complete this research with professional protocol and add to the body of literature on leadership.

Sincerely,

Carol Renner, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Kearney Public School District
310 West 24th Street
Kearney, NE 68847

APPENDIX D

Elementary Principals' Letter

Melissa S. Wheelock
3806 Avenue L
Kearney, NE 68847
(h) 308-237-9406 (w) 308-698-8230

melissa.wheelock@kearneypublic.org

April 15, 2005

Dear Colleague:

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research study: *Teacher Assessment of School Climate and Its Relationship to Years of Working with an Elementary School Administrator*. I am currently a doctoral student at The University of South Dakota in the Educational Administration program. I am also your colleague and am serving as the elementary principal at Northeast Elementary in Kearney, Nebraska.

This study involves 100% of teachers in your elementary school. I am soliciting your assistance in distributing the teacher letters and surveys at the next grade-level meeting. Teachers are being asked to complete the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE)*, a brief assessment of the climate in your building. Completion of this survey should take no longer than ten minutes. All individual results will remain confidential, as will the results from any individual building. This study is significant because it will analyze if a relationship exists between teachers' perceived assessment of school climate and the number of years they have worked with an administrator.

At the grade-level meeting, please distribute the letters and surveys which will explain the purpose of the study. Directions will be provided as well. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary and strictly confidential. Individual teacher names and individual schools will not be identified in the results in any way. Teacher results will be grouped for the data analysis, so the results from individual buildings will not be reported.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may call me at (308) 698-8230 or Dr. Jay Heath at The University of South Dakota at (605) 677-5366. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a human subject, please contact The University of South Dakota Research Compliance Office at (605) 677-6184. If you are interested in a summary of the study's results, I would be happy to provide you with one when the study is completed.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wheelock
Doctoral Candidate

This study is being conducted under the direction and with approval of the student's Doctoral committee at the University of South Dakota.

APPENDIX E

Elementary Teachers' Letter

Melissa S. Wheelock
3806 Avenue L
Kearney, NE 68847
(h) 308-237-9406 (w) 308-698-8230

melissa.wheelock@kearneypublic.org

April 15, 2005

Dear Teacher:

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research study: *Teacher Assessment of School Climate and Its Relationship to Years of Working with an Elementary School Administrator*. I am currently a doctoral student at The University of South Dakota in the Educational Administration program. I am also an elementary principal at Northeast Elementary.

This study involves teachers in our school district. I am soliciting your response to the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools*, a brief assessment of teachers' perception of the climate in your building. Completion of this survey should take no more than ten minutes. All individual results will remain confidential, as will the results from any individual building. This study is significant because it will analyze if a relationship exists between teacher perception of school climate and the numbers of years worked with an elementary school administrator.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please return the survey in the envelope provided. If you do decide to participate in this research, please enclose your survey in the manila envelope provided.

Please respond to each item on the survey as honestly as possible. Remember that your name and your school will not be identified in any way. The envelope containing your response will not be used to identify your data in any way. There will be no connection between you and the data you provide. There is no risk to you through your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may call me at (308) 698-8230 or Dr. Jay Heath at The University of South Dakota at (605) 677-5366. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a human subject, please contact The University of South Dakota Research Compliance Office at (605) 677-6184.

Completion of this survey should take only ten minutes. If you are interested in a summary of the study's results, please send a self-addressed envelope to me at Northeast Elementary.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wheelock
Doctoral Candidate

This study is being conducted under the direction and with approval of the student's Doctoral committee at The University of South Dakota.

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APPENDIX F

Letter to Dr. Wayne Hoy

Melissa S. Wheelock
3806 Avenue L
Kearney, NE 68847

(h) 308-237-9406

(w) 308-698-8230

melissa.wheelock@kearneypublic.org

January 17, 2005

Dr. Wayne K. Hoy
Professor
The Ohio State University
116 Ramseyer Hall
29 W. Woodruff
Columbus, OH 43210

Dear Dr. Hoy:

I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration at The University of South Dakota. My research proposal is entitled *Teacher Assessment of School Climate and Its Relationship to Years of Working with an Elementary School Administrator*.

I am requesting your permission to use the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire for Elementary Schools* as the instrument I will administer to the teachers in my study. Approximately 198 elementary teachers in a midwestern Nebraska school district will be completing the *OCDQ-RE* as a part of my research.

I would be happy to provide you with a copy of the results of my study, as well as respond to any other questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wheelock
Northeast Elementary Principal
910 East 34th Street
Kearney, NE 68847

Doctoral Candidate
Educational Administration

This study is being conducted under the direction and with the approval of the student's Doctoral Committee at The University of South Dakota.