Teacher Perception Of Their Authority And Responsibility For School-Wide Discipline And Its Effect On School Climate

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TEACHER PERCEPTION OF THEIR AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR
SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE AND ITS EFFECT ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

by

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1999
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background or purpose of the study and the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The hypothesis of this study states that teacher perceptions of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline systems affect the school climate. Subsidiary questions ask (1) Does the amount of teacher preparation for student management affect teacher perception of school climate? (2) Does gender have an effect on teacher perception of school climate? (3) Is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building? Terms are defined; rationale of the study is established and summarized. The chapter concludes by explaining the limitations of the study.

Background of the Problem

Schools today are complicated systems that require teachers to function in dual roles. They must first fill the traditional role of transmitter of knowledge. Additionally, teachers must somehow maintain an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning in an increasingly disorderly school environment.

There is well documented evidence that increasingly more children and youth are developing emotional and behavioral difficulties (Walker, Colvin & Ramsey, 1995, Edelman, 1995, King & Schwabenlender, 1994). Reasons cited for the increase in both internalizing and externalizing disorders include deteriorating family structures, increased
poverty, and more violence at home, school, and in the neighborhood. In general, these measured changes in adolescent behavior have increased at faster rates than equivalent conduct by adults. (Wynne, 1994)

This grim picture of society also includes crisis levels of substance abuse in children and adults. In addition, 59% of all children will be living in single parent households by the time they are eighteen. Increase in domestic violence has had a negative impact on child development, along with the absence of adult supervision in the home. At an early age many children are exposed to violence in their homes (Edelman, 1995). Aggressive behavior is perpetuated by negative, harsh tactics in the home.

In urban areas with disadvantaged populations, incidences of violence, substance and gang related activities are more pronounced. As New Jersey is a largely urban state, many of these societal ills plague the population of the state. New Jersey is an active supporter of the sixth national Education Goal of the United States Department of Education, which states that every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning, by the year 2000 (U.S. Dept. of Educ., 1994).

Schools, however, can no longer guarantee safe environments. Despite efforts to maintain safe climates in schools, they are often the backdrop for aggression and antisocial behavior. This is evidenced by the number of students who carry weapons to school, destroy property and demonstrate assaultive behavior. These numbers are documented in New Jersey schools by the reports of incidents noted in the Annual Report of Vandalism, Violence and Substance Abuse that school administrators are required to complete annually.
In New Jersey, legislation has been enacted to protect the safety of individuals in school. Zero tolerance, for example, relates to the possession of weapons in school. With the adoption of zero tolerance policies, students in possession of weapons or drugs can be immediately suspended and/or expelled from school. In addition, schools throughout the state have security systems in place to ensure the safety of the people within (Asbury Park Press, 1999). Many schools are equipped with security staff, metal detectors, and video cameras to monitor school safety.

Teachers' sense of responsibility and obligation in accepting the dual role of knowledge transmitter and behavior manager can affect the overall functioning of a school. In the specific case of schools for students with emotional and behavior disorders, teachers face the complexity of providing instructional activities while addressing frequent behavior management issues. Their willingness to take responsibility for these behavioral issues, not only in the domain of their classroom, but in the school as a whole, may affect what has been termed the climate of the school.

Statement of the Problems

The research will examine the component of schools referred to as school climate to determine if climate is affected by teacher perception of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline systems in three special education schools in New Jersey.

Primary question: Do teacher perceptions of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affect school climate in three special education schools in New Jersey?
Subsidiary questions:

1. Does the amount of preparation that teachers have in student management affect their perceptions of school climate?
2. Does gender have an effect on teacher perception of school climate?
3. Is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building?

Theoretical Framework

**Effective Schools and School Climate**

The search for “effective schools” has been ongoing since Edmonds (1979) introduced the concept of effective schools. Effective school research continued during the next fifteen years. This research demonstrated that student achievement “is associated with certain observable characteristics of schools” (Lezotte, 1991). Some of these characteristics include high expectations for students, instructional focus, and measurement of school climate. Other characteristics for effective schools that are recognized in research are strong administrative leadership, high expectations of student achievement, and an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning.

In summarizing the results of effective school research, Walberg, Bakolis, Bast and Baer (1989) conclude that effective schools are those that “have strong instructional leadership, a safe and orderly climate, a school-wide emphasis on basic skills, high teacher expectations for student achievement, continuous assessment of student programs, and intensive and extensive parent involvement.” Effective schools promote learning by a design that results in increased achievement on the part of students.
Levine and Lezotte (1990) provide a comprehensive overview of research on unusually effective schools and efforts being made to initiate effective schools programs nationwide. The characteristics of schools that are unusually successful are known as "correlates" and are exclusive of students' socioeconomic backgrounds. The authors list the resulting sets of correlates that are best supported by the literature as a whole. Their findings point to productive school climate and culture as a key component of effective schools.

Characteristics of Unusually Effective Schools

Productive School Climate and Culture

1. Orderly environment

2. Faculty commitment to a shared and articulated mission focused on achievement

3. Schoolwide problem-solving orientation faculty cohesion, collaboration, consensus, communication and collegiality

4. Faculty input into decision making Schoolwide emphasis on recognizing positive performance

Recurring themes appear in effective schools research that form the focus of this study. The first is the importance of school climate to student achievement. The second is the importance of a total, school-wide approach to establishing good school discipline. The third is that schools that establish a total approach to school discipline hold teachers responsible for handling routine discipline problems (Wayson, 1985).

Review of the literature reveals the various instruments that have been designed to measure school climate. Defining school climate is not an easy task as school climate cannot be defined by a single phrase. It must, rather, be described in terms of the components that contribute to the school environment. Literature abounds with these

"A school’s climate is the product of the interaction between the organizational structure that surrounds the school and the roles, forms, and values expressed in the attitudes, behaviors, and communication patterns of the people involved" (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). The authors go on to define climate as "a comprehensive structure made up of culture, physical plant, organizational structure, social relationships and individual behaviors." Furthermore, school climate is not a static entity, but rather a fluctuating one. The climate of the school reflects the "feel" of the school (Sweeney, 1992), the shared beliefs of the people who work and learn within it. These shared beliefs are reflected in the key beliefs and values that influence the behavior of those who hold them. Sweeney goes on to state that "a winning school climate provides the very foundation for a sound educational program. When the climate is right, people are inspired to do their best. Teachers and students do what needs to be done to stimulate learning and achievement generally rises."

This concept of a positive climate is particularly important for the population of students involved in this study. Many students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders have been diagnosed as conduct disordered, oppositional and defiant. Instruction cannot ensue until and unless order is established in the classroom. Maintaining a positive school climate helps teacher morale and enables teachers to remain motivated to continue to work with these students.
Positive school climate is much more than "feel good". It is a complex phenomenon that is relatively easy to perceive, but difficult to define, measure and manipulate. A positive school climate is the result of many actions and influences. Ellis (1988) defined a school with a healthy climate as having enthusiastic, hardworking students, a dedicated and cooperative teaching staff, and a sense of trust, mutual respect, and support between teachers and administrators. In a positive climate teachers and students are friendly, student work is displayed, there is a sense of order and pride, and an appreciation and respect for others is evident (Taylor, 1989). Other elements present in a positive school climate are trust, empowerment, student social and academic growth, and high morale and collegiality for staff.

School climate, then, is the sum total of, and dynamic interactions among, the psychosocial, academic, and physical dimensions of the school's environment (Haynes, 1998). It is the very essence of what schools are all about. Within schools exhibiting a positive climate, an atmosphere that generates high faculty morale is evidenced by increased job satisfaction and productivity. There exists an aura of cohesiveness as well as an increased sense of school pride (Witcher, 1993). These same schools are often characterized by a high rate of student attendance and academic achievement. Researchers agree that a positive school climate is crucial to successful student achievement.

For the purpose of this study school climate will refer to an environment throughout a school building which staff members perceive as safe and orderly, and where positive relationships between students and staff foster learning. Classroom climate, or the environment within a specific classroom, may or may not differ from the
overall school climate. For this study, however, the climate of the school building, not the individual classroom, is being addressed.

It is crucial for schools to maintain positive school climates to increase the number of teachers willing to make a commitment to work with difficult student populations. In addition, if teachers do not perceive their environment as positive, they are more likely to lose interest in teaching, dislike who they have become on the job, exhaust themselves applying ineffective strategies, be terminated from their position, or quit (Webber & Sheuermann, 1997).

Child study team records indicate that very often students who have emotional/behavioral disorders do not experience an academically motivating climate at home. Thus their desire to achieve academically is often derived mainly from the school environment. In school their interactions with staff and fellow students, plus the curriculum and instructional strategies to which they are exposed, combine to form the climate that will influence their academic achievement. With the exception of instructional factors, interactions aimed at improving school climate are the most important ingredients in creating positive student behavior. Jones (1984) cites research of numerous authors who point to the significant relationships between student behavior and the quality of personal relationships within the school environment. Students who feel safe, accepted, cared for and involved in school; that is, who function in a positive school climate, seldom exhibit consistently disruptive behavior.

Students with Behavioral Disorders in Special Settings

Disruptive behavior is one of the identifying characteristics of many emotionally disturbed adolescents. Although research on misconduct is often conducted in a regular
school setting, the focus of this study is on the schools where students have been placed after having been removed from regular school settings. Many of these students have been diagnosed by psychiatrists referencing the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) as criteria for determining their eligibility for being classified emotionally disturbed. As the teachers in this study deal almost exclusively with students who fit these diagnoses, it is important to understand these disorders.

Disorders which would previously have resulted in the classification emotionally disturbed (NJ Administrative Code, 1997) are now referred to as emotional/behavioral disorders and include attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and depression. The diagnosis outlines repetitive and persistent patterns of behavior that act against age appropriate norms or rules of society for a period of at least six months (Kaiser & Hester, 1997). For educational purposes, these students were classified emotionally disturbed and their disorder is viewed as a barrier to their educational achievement. These childhood disorders occur in about 5 to 10% of the total population of school age children (Kaiser & Hester, 1997).

At the time of this writing, new legislation for the rules of New Jersey Special Education codes have been enacted; NJAC:6:28 has been readopted as NJAC6A:14 Special Education. These modifications attempt to align New Jersey regulations in special education to the regulations of the United States Department of Education Individuals with Disabilities Act. With the changes in effect, the New Jersey classifications emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted fall into the category behavioral disabilities. The classifications of communication handicapped,
neurologically impaired, or perceptually impaired now belong to the category learning and/or language disabilities. The classification multiply handicapped has been renamed multiple disabilities.

Students with emotional/behavioral disorders are frequently characterized with externalizing disorders. Their behavior is often described as having poor impulse control, being chronically disobedient, having low frustration levels, and lacking contact with reality (Clarizio, 1992). Working with this student population in an academic environment is challenging and demanding. Often the students have experienced many school failures before being placed in a special education facility. Once in a special placement, they are then grouped together with other students with similar disorders.

It is because of the frequent disruptive behavior that many of these students have been removed from their district schools and placed in special education programs that will address their specific acting-out or dangerous behaviors. One type of placement in New Jersey is in special education schools for students with emotional and behavioral disorders run by Educational Services Commissions. These schools were designed to serve this challenging student population in what is called an out of district placement.

Based on the legal and philosophical concept of least restrictive environment, students are placed in educational services schools once a school district has attempted to educate the student within the regular school setting. The child study team, acting for the public school, must provide evidence that the nature or severity of a student’s educational disability is such that “education in the pupil’s regular class with the use of appropriate supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (NJ Administrative Code 6:28-2.10). The New Jersey Legislature allows school districts the legal
mechanism to cooperatively design strategies and programs to meet identified needs of students.

In New Jersey, an educational services commission is an agency established or to be established in one or more counties for the purpose of carrying on programs of educational research or development, and providing to public school districts such educational and administrative services as may be authorized pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education. Educational services commissions operate much the same as a public school district in New Jersey. As such, there is in each commission, a superintendent appointed by a Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of superintendents of consortium members that make up the educational services commission.

Schools and programs developed by the educational services commissions must comply with all state mandates. Cooperative contracting allows each board of education to select program needs from a list of services offered. The board maintains local control through membership in the commission Representative Assembly. The Assembly, comprised of a representative from each member district, annually elects a fifteen member Board of Directors to govern the commission.

Whether students remain in their district school, or are placed in an alternate educational setting, attention must be focused on managing their behavior and providing them with a framework for behavior within which they can function and learn.

Teacher Responsibility for Student Discipline

Addressing the needs of discipline for school is nothing new. Codes of conduct and policies regarding appropriate school behavior are part of the governance of every
school district. Historically, teachers were permitted to paddle students, or use other forms of corporal punishment to convince students to comply with school rules so that lessons would not be interrupted. While corporal punishment is no longer legal in New Jersey, expectations for appropriate student behavior is the norm. These expectations for students are frequently available for students in school handbooks and publications. Consequences for various school offenses are outlined in these documents. New Jersey state regulations recently complied with national codes by stating that students with disabilities are subjected to the same discipline expectations as students without disabilities.

During most of its twenty two year existence, the annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, has identified "lack of discipline" as the most serious problem facing the nation's educational system (Cotton & Wikelund, 1990). As far back as 1984, former Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell, named discipline as the single most important priority for schools. Binkly and Anton (1984) describe an equation when a positive environment is the goal of discipline, and a positive environment fosters a disciplined atmosphere.

In a school system every person may have a different idea of what constitutes appropriate behavior. Coping with and preventing discipline problems requires acceptance that each person, each classroom, and each school has its own unique personality. Regardless, discipline must be considered a part of the "curriculum" of the school (Thomas, 1988). Staff members must therefore be involved in making day-to-day decisions that create the school's discipline climate.
The literature review in chapter two will illustrate the role good discipline contributes to a positive school climate. Despite the research, decisions concerning student discipline are often regarded as of lesser importance than those concerned with instruction (Ingersoll, 1993). Classroom control, however, is fundamental and an integral part of any lesson. Without a degree of discipline, instructional processes cannot proceed at all. How, then, should discipline in the school be defined?

Jones (1984) says that “discipline, most simply stated, is the business of enforcing simple classroom rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption. It is the slow, bit-by-bit, time consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting a certain way.”

Rather than focusing on systematic procedures for monitoring students, Jones (1984) suggests that discipline be viewed as a process for teaching students and teachers alternative methods of meeting their personal and intellectual needs. By accepting this definition a student management program focuses on training teachers and students in new methods for structuring the learning environment, presenting information, learning, interacting and solving problems. The emphasis shifts away from controlling students and moves toward creating methods that involve both students and teachers in mutually positive educational experiences within the school setting.

As will be illustrated in the literature review, poorly disciplined schools drain the energies of both adult and child away from the central educational mission of teaching and learning. Nothing will do more for faculty morale than a well run school and a disciplined student body (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992). Teachers will feel good about the school and as a result have high expectations for their students.
Disruptive behavior in school not only interferes with an individual student’s academic progress, but with the climate of the school community. The cost of student misconduct is high on the morale of the faculty. In 1986, for example, 33% of the public school teachers surveyed by the National Center for Educational Statistics, reported that student misconduct interfered with their teaching.

Teacher Training

How well then, are teachers prepared to participate in the design and implementation of school-wide discipline programs? Given the extensive research that has demonstrated the important relationship between teacher input in establishing effective discipline and resultant improvement in school climate and student achievement, it would be expected that a significant component of teacher education should include student management techniques, or discipline strategies for the classroom.

Beginning teachers need help in developing skills and knowledge that are instrumental in accomplishing the predictable day to day tasks of teaching. Essential features of preparation would include specific courses and experiences in classroom management and provisions for the opportunities to demonstrate the ability to put theory into practice (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). The literature review will reveal a link between teachers’ sense of efficacy and orderly behavior of students. It will also investigate the types of preservice programs available in undergraduate education that focus on student discipline and management.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that teacher perception of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline systems
affects the climate of the school. If teachers believe they are responsible and have the authority for the maintenance of a school-wide system, it is hypothesized that they will perceive that a positive school climate exists.

It is further hypothesized that the amount of preservice training teachers have received in discipline strategies for students affects teacher perception of school climate.

Additionally, the study will address whether teacher gender and years of experience affect their perception of school climate.

Definition of Terms

The New Jersey Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 28, defines and delineates terms and authority for special education in New Jersey.

Special education means specially designed instruction to meet the educational needs of pupils with educational disabilities including, but not limited to, subject matter instruction, physical education and vocational training.

Pupil with an educational disability means a pupil who has been determined to be eligible for special education and/or related services according to New Jersey code.

Classification of pupils determined to be eligible for special education and/or related services shall be determined collaboratively by the child study team, a teacher having knowledge of the pupil’s educational performance, the school principal and staff members identifying the potentially educationally disabled pupil.

Child Study Team is an interdisciplinary group of appropriately certified persons who evaluate and participate in the determination of eligibility of pupils for special services and/or related services. The team consists of a school psychologist, a learning disabilities teacher consultant, and a school social worker.
Emotionally disturbed means the exhibiting of seriously disordered behavior over an extended period of time which adversely affects educational performance and is characterized by 1 or 2 below. An evaluation by a psychiatrist experienced in working with children is required. In the proposed new changes these students will be referred to as emotional and behavioral disordered (EBD)

1. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.

2. Behaviors inappropriate to the circumstances, a general or pervasive mood of depression or the development of physical symptoms or irrational fears.

Multiply handicapped means the presence of two or more educationally disabling conditions which interact in such a manner that programs designed for the separate disabling conditions will not meet the pupil’s educational needs.

Neurologically or perceptually impaired means impairment in the ability to process information due to physiological, organizational or integrational dysfunction which is not the result of any other educationally disabling condition or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. In the proposed changes the N.I. category will correspond to the Federal eligibility category which will only include children with traumatic brain injuries who have been examined and diagnosed by a neurologist.

Educational Services Commission means an agency established or to be established in one or more counties for the purpose of carrying on programs of educational research or development and providing to public school districts such educational and administrative services as may be authorized pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education.
Preservice refers to undergraduate education and coursework for teachers in their preparation for obtaining teacher certification in colleges and/or universities in New Jersey.

Least restrictive environment dictates that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of a pupil with an educational disability from the pupil's regular class occurs only when the nature or severity of the educational disability is such that education in the pupil's regular class with the use of appropriate supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to three special education schools operated by New Jersey State Educational Services Commissions, one in each of three similar counties in New Jersey. For the most part, students in these schools have the classifications emotionally disturbed, neurologically impaired, or multiply handicapped.

Demographics for the three schools provides information on the number of students and their classifications. (See Table 1). Socio-economic levels of students are determined by the number of students eligible for federal free lunch. Information collected also details the gender of the students as of November, 1998.

All three schools report that students come from sending districts that include both urban and suburban populations.
Table 1

Students in the Schools

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Students</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Students</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Students</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>7-19</td>
<td>13-20</td>
<td>5-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Free Lunch</td>
<td>41 (61%)</td>
<td>37 (100%)</td>
<td>61 (51%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By law, the teachers of all three schools hold New Jersey teacher certifications. Certifications include either teacher of the handicapped or in some instances specific content certification such as physical education or art. Years of experience and whether or not teachers feel they have been trained in behavior strategies for disruptive students will be ascertained by teacher questionnaires and information obtained from building principals.

Significance of the Study

Teachers play a vital role in contributing to a positive school climate by actively taking responsibility for school-wide discipline. In the past, the role of student management was not viewed as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Given the research that supports the importance of positive climate to student achievement, attention must be given to teacher responsibility in decision making for student behavior.

The climate of the school must be characterized by an open, supportive environment so that teachers can develop a trusting relationship with each other and with
students. In this environment teachers can begin to perceive their responsibility for maintaining discipline. This study can be replicated in general educational settings to ascertain the perceptions of teachers regarding both the school climate, and their responsibility in maintaining order in the school.

Results of this study will indicate whether teachers need to be trained in methodology that encourages appropriate student behavior. Additionally, the results of this study will indicate if schools without effective teacher-involved behavior plans need to produce change to change the perceived climate. The effectiveness of a school-wide discipline system will, after all, be based on the skills and concerns of the individual teachers involved.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature pertaining to school climate, school-wide discipline, and teacher preparation in student management or discipline. It will illustrate the importance of the participation of the teaching staff in designing and implementing a school discipline program.

School Climate

School climate cannot be defined by a single phrase. It must, rather, be described in terms of the components that contribute to the school environment. Literature abounds with these descriptions. In the literature climate is referred to, and sometimes distinctions are made for, school climate, school health, learning climate, classroom climate, and social climate.

Early climate research that focused on elementary and secondary schools was based primarily upon the work of Halpin and Croft (1963). They pioneered research that described effects of climate on both teachers and students, and relationships between climate and various outcomes in a school. Halpin and Croft identified six basic clusters of school climate, along a continuum from open to closed: open, autonomous, controlled, familiar, paternal, closed. Hoy et. al. (1990) adopt the concept proposed by Halpin that climate forms a continuum, ranging from open to closed. According to these researchers
schools with an open climate benefit from reality centered leadership from the principal and from a committed faculty. It should also be noted that the climate may be a perception of the faculty (Hoy & Miskel, 1978) and is open or closed if the faculty describes it as such.

Further research findings by Hoy and Miskel (1978) do not point conclusively to a correlation between healthy school climate and student achievement. However, they suggest that openness in school climate and effective characteristics of schools are related in predictable ways. For example, the more open the school’s climate, the less the sense of alienation the students feel toward the school and its professional personnel.

There are many ideas on what a healthy school climate is and how to achieve it (Sweeney, 1992, Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993, Witcher, 1993, Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). Most agree that a positive school climate is important because it is associated with higher student achievement, better behavior, and better attitudes. Furthermore, school climate has a noteworthy association with job satisfaction (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1994).

Lindelow (1989) cites the landmark study of Brookover. This study included 11, 466 students, 453 teachers and 91 principals in 91 elementary schools randomly selected from 2200 Michigan elementary schools. The research team concluded from the analysis of their data that school climate, rather than family background as reflected in student- body composition, has a more direct impact on achievement.

As many students do not experience an academically motivating climate at home, the desire to achieve academically is derived mainly from the school environment. In school their interactions with staff and fellow students, plus the curriculum and
instructional strategies to which they are exposed, combine to form the climate that will influence their academic achievement. With the exception of instructional factors, interactions aimed at improving school climate are the most important ingredients in creating positive student behavior. Jones (1984) cites research of numerous authors who point to the significant relationships between student behavior and the quality of personal relationships within the school environment. Students who feel safe, accepted, cared for and involved in school; that is, who function in a positive school climate, seldom exhibit consistently disruptive behavior.

Students with emotional and behavioral disorders often live in environments that are unstable, inconsistent, and chaotic. In order to learn and feel good about themselves, they need the elements of a positive school climate most often listed by researchers. These elements are: order, structure, and consistency; well-organized and predictable environments; clear and realistic expectations, and a curriculum that stresses student interests and talents (Abrams & Segal, 1998).

Positive school climate is much more than “feel good”. It is a complex phenomenon that is relatively easy to perceive, but difficult to define, measure and manipulate. A positive school climate is the result of many actions and influences. Ellis (1988) defined a school with a healthy climate as having enthusiastic, hardworking students, a dedicated and cooperative teaching staff, and a sense of trust, mutual respect, and support between teachers and administrators. In a positive climate teachers and students are friendly, student work is displayed, there is a sense of order and pride, and an appreciation and respect for others is evident (Taylor, 1989). Other elements present in a positive school climate are trust, empowerment, social and academic growth, high morale
and collegiality.

Review of the literature reveals many ideas on what a healthy school climate is and how to achieve it. School climate is the feel an individual gets from his or her experiences within a school's social system (Lindelow, 1989). A healthy school climate is important because it is associated with higher student achievement, better behavior, and better attitudes.

Because of its impact on successful educational experiences, attempts are made to assess climate rather than rely on feelings or intuition to estimate it. For example, Rutter, Maughan, Ouston & Smith (1975) found school climate factors that relate to student behavior.

Rutter’s team of researchers followed a group of children from London’s inner city and concluded after several years of study that differences in school climate contributed to differences in student performance. This study showed that in high schools with less misbehavior, teachers held higher expectations, demonstrated responsible professional behavior, and were more positive and consistent with students. Furthermore, the Rutter team reported that schools with a positive climate are also characterized by teacher participation in decision making.

However abstract a concept school climate may seem, researchers have attempted to measure school climate to determine its key elements. The use of climate measures as predictors of school effectiveness and student achievement is substantiated by current educational literature. When elements can be identified and measured, then changes can be implemented to improve areas that may have a negative impact on climate. Because of its impact on successful educational experiences, attempts are made to assess climate
rather than rely on feelings or intuition to estimate it.

The work of Halpin and Croft (1963) provided the first attempt to measure a school's climate. In their seminal study they referred to a school's climate as being "opened" or "closed". Halpin and Croft created the OCDQ — Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire, to measure important components of a school's organizational climate in elementary school. They designated eight dimensions of school climate found after using 64 items administered to 71 elementary schools. Climate profiles could then be plotted based on these eight subtests. Four subtests reflect faculty behavior: hindrance, intimacy, disengagement, esprit. Four sub areas reflect principal behavior: production emphasis, aloofness, consideration, trust.

The Child Study Center at Yale University began the task of measuring school climate in 1968, under the direction of Dr. James P. Comer. Comer felt that the effects of climate were significant for all students, and student achievement and serious behavior problems related to poor psychosocial and academic dimensions of the school's climate. Since that time, the Center has developed the School Climate Survey (SDP). The survey used by the Center contains 80 descriptive statements about prevailing school conditions. Four versions of the SDP exist: elementary and middle schools, high school, staff, and parent versions. Researchers at Yale University and Hofstra University are using these surveys to better understand climate in schools.

Iowa State University developed the School Improvement Inventory, which offers empirical evidence that school climate is related to student achievement. School climate can be improved by describing the entity one is seeking to improve. Student discipline and student attitudes appear to be climate dissatisfiers. In a school in which teachers
view discipline as a significant problem, there is seldom a winning climate (Sweeney). In schools where discipline or student attitudes are not perceived as positive, the climate generally suffers.

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) designed the Learning Climate Inventory. This inventory is composed of sections that measure the major components of the school learning climate. One component recognizes a safe and orderly environment. A positive climate exists when the total school environment is conducive to good discipline and when rules and procedures are well defined.

The School Discipline Climate Survey (Grossnickle, 1993), provides information about current levels of staff expectation for thirteen sub scales. The Effective School Battery (Gottfredson, 1984) is an instrument designed to assess the climate of schools in developing and evaluating school improvement projects. Another instrument is the SDCMS, Student Discipline Classroom Management Strategy (Levin, 1984). This instrument deals with teachers’ attitudes toward discipline problems and classroom management strategies and how these attitudes dictate the climate of the school.

The Tennessee School Climate Inventory (Butler & Rakaw, 1995) measures several dimensions of school climate. This inventory was developed as part of a learning environment information system to be used in school restructuring efforts in Tennessee during the 1989-90 school year. The inventory contains 49 statements, comprised of 7 scales of 7 items each, which yield quantitative estimates of school climate dimensions. The seven scales of the inventory are: order, leadership, environment, involvement, instruction, expectations, and collaboration.

Hoy and Tarter (1992) measure school health through their Organization Health
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background or purpose of the study and the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The hypothesis of this study states that teacher perceptions of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline systems affect the school climate. Subsidiary questions ask (1) Does the amount of teacher preparation for student management affect teacher perception of school climate? (2) Does gender have an effect on teacher perception of school climate? (3) Is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building? Terms are defined; rationale of the study is established and summarized. The chapter concludes by explaining the limitations of the study.

Background of the Problem

Schools today are complicated systems that require teachers to function in dual roles. They must first fill the traditional role of transmitter of knowledge. Additionally, teachers must somehow maintain an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning in an increasingly disorderly school environment.

There is well documented evidence that increasingly more children and youth are developing emotional and behavioral difficulties (Walker, Colvin & Ramsey, 1995, Edelman, 1995, King & Schwabenlender, 1994). Reasons cited for the increase in both internalizing and externalizing disorders include deteriorating family structures, increased
poverty, and more violence at home, school, and in the neighborhood. In general, these measured changes in adolescent behavior have increased at faster rates than equivalent conduct by adults. (Wynne, 1994)

This grim picture of society also includes crisis levels of substance abuse in children and adults. In addition, 59% of all children will be living in single parent households by the time they are eighteen. Increase in domestic violence has had a negative impact on child development, along with the absence of adult supervision in the home. At an early age many children are exposed to violence in their homes (Edelman, 1995). Aggressive behavior is perpetuated by negative, harsh tactics in the home.

In urban areas with disadvantaged populations, incidences of violence, substance and gang related activities are more pronounced. As New Jersey is a largely urban state, many of these societal ills plague the population of the state. New Jersey is an active supporter of the sixth national Education Goal of the United States Department of Education, which states that every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning, by the year 2000 (U.S. Dept. of Educ., 1994).

Schools, however, can no longer guarantee safe environments. Despite efforts to maintain safe climates in schools, they are often the backdrop for aggression and antisocial behavior. This is evidenced by the number of students who carry weapons to school, destroy property and demonstrate assultive behavior. These numbers are documented in New Jersey schools by the reports of incidents noted in the Annual Report of Vandalism, Violence and Substance Abuse that school administrators are required to complete annually.
In New Jersey, legislation has been enacted to protect the safety of individuals in school. Zero tolerance, for example, relates to the possession of weapons in school. With the adoption of zero tolerance policies, students in possession of weapons or drugs can be immediately suspended and/or expelled from school. In addition, schools throughout the state have security systems in place to ensure the safety of the people within (Asbury Park Press, 1999). Many schools are equipped with security staff, metal detectors, and video cameras to monitor school safety.

Teachers' sense of responsibility and obligation in accepting the dual role of knowledge transmitter and behavior manager can affect the overall functioning of a school. In the specific case of schools for students with emotional and behavior disorders, teachers face the complexity of providing instructional activities while addressing frequent behavior management issues. Their willingness to take responsibility for these behavioral issues, not only in the domain of their classroom, but in the school as a whole, may affect what has been termed the climate of the school.

Statement of the Problems

The research will examine the component of schools referred to as school climate to determine if climate is affected by teacher perception of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline systems in three special education schools in New Jersey.

Primary question: Do teacher perceptions of their personal authority and individual responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affect school climate in three special education schools in New Jersey?
Subsidiary questions:

1. Does the amount of preparation that teachers have in student management affect their perceptions of school climate?

2. Does gender have an effect on teacher perception of school climate?

3. Is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building?

Theoretical Framework

Effective Schools and School Climate

The search for “effective schools” has been ongoing since Edmonds (1979) introduced the concept of effective schools. Effective school research continued during the next fifteen years. This research demonstrated that student achievement “is associated with certain observable characteristics of schools “(Lezotte, 1991). Some of these characteristics include high expectations for students, instructional focus, and measurement of school climate. Other characteristics for effective schools that are recognized in research are strong administrative leadership, high expectations of student achievement, and an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning.

In summarizing the results of effective school research, Walberg, Bakolis, Bast and Baer (1989) conclude that effective schools are those that “have strong instructional leadership, a safe and orderly climate, a school-wide emphasis on basic skills, high teacher expectations for student achievement, continuous assessment of student programs, and intensive and extensive parent involvement.” Effective schools promote learning by a design that results in increased achievement on the part of students.
Levine and Lezotte (1990) provide a comprehensive overview of research on unusually effective schools and efforts being made to initiate effective schools programs nationwide. The characteristics of schools that are unusually successful are known as "correlates" and are exclusive of students' socioeconomic backgrounds. The authors list the resulting sets of correlates that are best supported by the literature as a whole. Their findings point to productive school climate and culture as a key component of effective schools.

Characteristics of Unusually Effective Schools

Productive School Climate and Culture

1. Orderly environment

2. Faculty commitment to a shared and articulated mission
   focused on achievement

3. Schoolwide problem-solving orientation
   faculty cohesion, collaboration, consensus,
   communication and collegiality

4. Faculty input into decision making
   Schoolwide emphasis on recognizing positive performance

Recurring themes appear in effective schools research that form the focus of this study. The first is the importance of school climate to student achievement. The second is the importance of a total, school-wide approach to establishing good school discipline. The third is that schools that establish a total approach to school discipline hold teachers responsible for handling routine discipline problems (Wayson, 1985).

Review of the literature reveals the various instruments that have been designed to measure school climate. Defining school climate is not an easy task as school climate cannot be defined by a single phrase. It must, rather, be described in terms of the components that contribute to the school environment. Literature abounds with these

"A school's climate is the product of the interaction between the organizational structure that surrounds the school and the roles, forms, and values expressed in the attitudes, behaviors, and communication patterns of the people involved" (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). The authors go on to define climate as "a comprehensive structure made up of culture, physical plant, organizational structure, social relationships and individual behaviors." Furthermore, school climate is not a static entity, but rather a fluctuating one. The climate of the school reflects the "feel" of the school (Sweeney, 1992), the shared beliefs of the people who work and learn within it. These shared beliefs are reflected in the key beliefs and values that influence the behavior of those who hold them. Sweeney goes on to state that "a winning school climate provides the very foundation for a sound educational program. When the climate is right, people are inspired to do their best. Teachers and students do what needs to be done to stimulate learning and achievement generally rises."

This concept of a positive climate is particularly important for the population of students involved in this study. Many students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders have been diagnosed as conduct disordered, oppositional and defiant. Instruction cannot ensue until and unless order is established in the classroom. Maintaining a positive school climate helps teacher morale and enables teachers to remain motivated to continue to work with these students.
Positive school climate is much more than "feel good". It is a complex phenomenon that is relatively easy to perceive, but difficult to define, measure and manipulate. A positive school climate is the result of many actions and influences. Ellis (1988) defined a school with a healthy climate as having enthusiastic, hardworking students, a dedicated and cooperative teaching staff, and a sense of trust, mutual respect, and support between teachers and administrators. In a positive climate teachers and students are friendly, student work is displayed, there is a sense of order and pride, and an appreciation and respect for others is evident (Taylor, 1989). Other elements present in a positive school climate are trust, empowerment, student social and academic growth, and high morale and collegiality for staff.

School climate, then, is the sum total of, and dynamic interactions among, the psychosocial, academic, and physical dimensions of the school’s environment (Haynes, 1998). It is the very essence of what schools are all about. Within schools exhibiting a positive climate, an atmosphere that generates high faculty morale is evidenced by increased job satisfaction and productivity. There exists an aura of cohesiveness as well as an increased sense of school pride (Witcher, 1993). These same schools are often characterized by a high rate of student attendance and academic achievement. Researchers agree that a positive school climate is crucial to successful student achievement.

For the purpose of this study school climate will refer to an environment throughout a school building which staff members perceive as safe and orderly, and where positive relationships between students and staff foster learning. Classroom climate, or the environment within a specific classroom, may or may not differ from the
overall school climate. For this study, however, the climate of the school building, not the individual classroom, is being addressed.

It is crucial for schools to maintain positive school climates to increase the number of teachers willing to make a commitment to work with difficult student populations. In addition, if teachers do not perceive their environment as positive, they are more likely to lose interest in teaching, dislike who they have become on the job, exhaust themselves applying ineffective strategies, be terminated from their position, or quit (Webber & Sheuermann, 1997).

Child study team records indicate that very often students who have emotional/behavioral disorders do not experience an academically motivating climate at home. Thus their desire to achieve academically is often derived mainly from the school environment. In school their interactions with staff and fellow students, plus the curriculum and instructional strategies to which they are exposed, combine to form the climate that will influence their academic achievement. With the exception of instructional factors, interactions aimed at improving school climate are the most important ingredients in creating positive student behavior. Jones (1984) cites research of numerous authors who point to the significant relationships between student behavior and the quality of personal relationships within the school environment. Students who feel safe, accepted, cared for and involved in school; that is, who function in a positive school climate, seldom exhibit consistently disruptive behavior.

**Students with Behavioral Disorders in Special Settings**

Disruptive behavior is one of the identifying characteristics of many emotionally disturbed adolescents. Although research on misconduct is often conducted in a regular
school setting, the focus of this study is on the schools where students have been placed after having been removed from regular school settings. Many of these students have been diagnosed by psychiatrists referencing the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) as criteria for determining their eligibility for being classified emotionally disturbed. As the teachers in this study deal almost exclusively with students who fit these diagnoses, it is important to understand these disorders.

Disorders which would previously have resulted in the classification emotionally disturbed (NJ Administrative Code, 1997) are now referred to as emotional/behavioral disorders and include attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and depression. The diagnosis outlines repetitive and persistent patterns of behavior that act against age appropriate norms or rules of society for a period of at least six months (Kaiser & Hester, 1997). For educational purposes, these students were classified emotionally disturbed and their disorder is viewed as a barrier to their educational achievement. These childhood disorders occur in about 5 to 10% of the total population of school age children (Kaiser & Hester, 1997).

At the time of this writing, new legislation for the rules of New Jersey Special Education codes have been enacted; NJAC:6:28 has been readopted as NJAC6A:14 Special Education. These modifications attempt to align New Jersey regulations in special education to the regulations of the United States Department of Education Individuals with Disabilities Act. With the changes in effect, the New Jersey classifications emotionally disturbed and socially maladjusted fall into the category behavioral disabilities. The classifications of communication handicapped,
neurologically impaired, or perceptually impaired now belong to the category learning and/or language disabilities. The classification multiply handicapped has been renamed multiple disabilities.

Students with emotional/behavioral disorders are frequently characterized with externalizing disorders. Their behavior is often described as having poor impulse control, being chronically disobedient, having low frustration levels, and lacking contact with reality (Clarizio, 1992). Working with this student population in an academic environment is challenging and demanding. Often the students have experienced many school failures before being placed in a special education facility. Once in a special placement, they are then grouped together with other students with similar disorders.

It is because of the frequent disruptive behavior that many of these students have been removed from their district schools and placed in special education programs that will address their specific acting-out or dangerous behaviors. One type of placement in New Jersey is in special education schools for students with emotional and behavioral disorders run by Educational Services Commissions. These schools were designed to serve this challenging student population in what is called an out of district placement.

Based on the legal and philosophical concept of least restrictive environment, students are placed in educational services schools once a school district has attempted to educate the student within the regular school setting. The child study team, acting for the public school, must provide evidence that the nature or severity of a student’s educational disability is such that “education in the pupil’s regular class with the use of appropriate supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (NJ Administrative Code 6:28-2.10). The New Jersey Legislature allows school districts the legal
mechanism to cooperatively design strategies and programs to meet identified needs of students.

In New Jersey, an educational services commission is an agency established or to be established in one or more counties for the purpose of carrying on programs of educational research or development, and providing to public school districts such educational and administrative services as may be authorized pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education. Educational services commissions operate much the same as a public school district in New Jersey. As such, there is in each commission, a superintendent appointed by a Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of superintendents of consortium members that make up the educational services commission.

Schools and programs developed by the educational services commissions must comply with all state mandates. Cooperative contracting allows each board of education to select program needs from a list of services offered. The board maintains local control through membership in the commission Representative Assembly. The Assembly, comprised of a representative from each member district, annually elects a fifteen member Board of Directors to govern the commission.

Whether students remain in their district school, or are placed in an alternate educational setting, attention must be focused on managing their behavior and providing them with a framework for behavior within which they can function and learn.

**Teacher Responsibility for Student Discipline**

Addressing the needs of discipline for school is nothing new. Codes of conduct and policies regarding appropriate school behavior are part of the governance of every
school district. Historically, teachers were permitted to paddle students, or use other forms of corporal punishment to convince students to comply with school rules so that lessons would not be interrupted. While corporal punishment is no longer legal in New Jersey, expectations for appropriate student behavior is the norm. These expectations for students are frequently available for students in school handbooks and publications. Consequences for various school offenses are outlined in these documents. New Jersey state regulations recently complied with national codes by stating that students with disabilities are subjected to the same discipline expectations as students without disabilities.

During most of its twenty two year existence, the annual Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, has identified “lack of discipline” as the most serious problem facing the nation’s educational system (Cotton & Wikelund, 1990). As far back as 1984, former Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell, named discipline as the single most important priority for schools. Binkly and Anton (1984) describe an equation when a positive environment is the goal of discipline, and a positive environment fosters a disciplined atmosphere.

In a school system every person may have a different idea of what constitutes appropriate behavior. Coping with and preventing discipline problems requires acceptance that each person, each classroom, and each school has its own unique personality. Regardless, discipline must be considered a part of the “curriculum” of the school (Thomas, 1988). Staff members must therefore be involved in making day-to-day decisions that create the school’s discipline climate.
The literature review in chapter two will illustrate the role good discipline contributes to a positive school climate. Despite the research, decisions concerning student discipline are often regarded as of lesser importance than those concerned with instruction (Ingersoll, 1993). Classroom control, however, is fundamental and an integral part of any lesson. Without a degree of discipline, instructional processes cannot proceed at all. How, then, should discipline in the school be defined?

Jones (1984) says that “discipline, most simply stated, is the business of enforcing simple classroom rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption. It is the slow, bit-by-bit, time consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting a certain way.”

Rather than focusing on systematic procedures for monitoring students, Jones (1984) suggests that discipline be viewed as a process for teaching students and teachers alternative methods of meeting their personal and intellectual needs. By accepting this definition a student management program focuses on training teachers and students in new methods for structuring the learning environment, presenting information, learning, interacting and solving problems. The emphasis shifts away from controlling students and moves toward creating methods that involve both students and teachers in mutually positive educational experiences within the school setting.

As will be illustrated in the literature review, poorly disciplined schools drain the energies of both adult and child away from the central educational mission of teaching and learning. Nothing will do more for faculty morale than a well run school and a disciplined student body (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992). Teachers will feel good about the school and as a result have high expectations for their students.
Inventory (OHI). This is a 44-item questionnaire on which educators are asked to describe their behavior. The results of the OHI mirror the interaction patterns in a school. Healthy schools are places where people like each other and they like their schools. Trust, commitment, cooperation, loyalty and teamwork are the hallmarks of such schools.

Some data regarding school climate was extrapolated from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1994). The final data set involved 9,987 teachers and 27,994 ratings of students. Four variables considered in this study were participation in decision-making, school climate, teacher job satisfaction, and sense of efficacy. Climate was found to be composed of three elements: principal leadership, faculty collegiality, and student discipline. These climate components were found to have a relatively strong association with teachers' feelings of job satisfaction.

The School Climate Survey is part of the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (Halderson, Kelly, & Keefe, 1987). This instrument measures climate solely by what most people believe, rather than as a collection of climate and individual satisfaction responses. The task force that developed this instrument found that measures of satisfaction use individual respondents who give personal affective reaction, and should be differentiated from measures of climate, which ask individuals to act as informants regarding what most people believe. That is, although everyone in a school works within the same school climate, perceptions about that climate will vary from individual to individual.

Some researchers are critical of school climate instruments. For example, Rojewski, Wendel, McInerney, Currin & Smith (1990) claim that climate is specific to an
individual school, and can only be measured within the framework of a specific school. Rather than use a published climate inventory as described above, some researchers (Rajewski, Wendel, McNerny & Smith, 1990) advocate the use of an individually designed survey tailored to a specific school.

School climate assessment tools may be limited because they cannot actually measure what is going on in a school, but rather the respondents’ perceptions of what is going on (Lindelow, Mazzarella, Scott, Ellis & Smith, 1989). The tools are useful, however, for pinpointing areas in which school climate needs improvement. Tools of climate measurement should thus be used in conjunction with the observations of a skilled leader.

Nusser and Haller (1995) caution that researchers have not been systematic in their use of measurement consensus. Their study indicates that climate measurements often neglect to measure correlations among targeted respondents in climate surveys. As climate refers to agreement of shared values and shared perceptions of participants, climate measures need to consider perceptions of students, teachers, administrators and parents. In their study they created three measures of school disciplinary climate based on the observations of the principals, students, or teachers in each school. Their findings indicated that people’s conception of a school’s disciplinary climate is not unitary across the three groups. As a school’s climate gains force as a result of shared perceptions of its participants, attention must be given to comparison of each group’s perceptions on climate instruments.

School climate measures may be limited because they can not measure what is actually going on in a school, but rather they measure the respondents’ perceptions of
what is going on. Regardless, climate measures can be useful tools for educators and administrators interested in improving a particular school or the schools within a district. To be an effective tool, the results of any instrument must be analyzed in conjunction with observations of all stakeholders in the school community.

Climate and Discipline

Results of surveys, questionnaires and studies to determine the components of school climate find school discipline as a key factor in a positive school climate; plus it is a variable that consistently shows need for improvement. School climate is frequently mentioned in the effective schools research as one of the variables important for student achievement. When referred to in effective schools research, climate frequently deals with the area of discipline, order and safety (Baluch & Malone, 1994). Making every school in America free of drugs and violence and fostering a disciplined environment conducive to learning by the year 2000, is the aim of the sixth National Education Goal (Aceem, 1993). School climate is addressed in this report as part of the Goal Six objectives. A positive school learning environment results when there is good discipline, and where rules and procedures are well defined and communicated to teachers, students, and parents (Dutweiler, 1986).

Maintaining a disciplined environment conducive to learning does not necessarily mean implementing tough policies to maintain control over students in a negative, punitive manner. The environment described in Goal Six is one of principals and teachers working together to create an atmosphere in which students and teachers are engaged in learning and where misbehavior is dealt with quickly, firmly, and fairly. According to the research from which Goal Six was developed, a disciplined environment relies on
school organization and climate. The research for Goal Six repeatedly finds that schools with disciplined environments are distinguished by teacher participation in decision making.

Also noted in Goal Six is a report by the New Jersey Education Commissioner, who recommends that districts develop policies to protect students and staff from disruptive behavior, promote pride and respect for persons and property, and hold students accountable without being oppressive or unfair. A good discipline policy contributes to feelings of self worth and high morale.

Pang (1992) investigated the relationship between school climate and discipline practices. This study focused on two aspects: 1) the ways of setting school rules and 2) the attitudes of teachers toward the use of reward and punishment. In this study 29 secondary schools in Hong Kong were used. Two author-constructed questionnaires were administered to a total of 2,320 teachers and 58 principals.

Three conclusions resulted from Pang's findings. First, the researcher found that female teachers usually have a more positive perception of school discipline climate and have a greater reward orientation than male teachers; thus gender bias exists in teacher perceptions. Second, generally girls' schools show a more positive discipline climate than boys or coeducational schools. Third, variables of teachers such as age, rank and teaching experience appear to be determinants in influencing results. A teacher who is older and with more experience in teaching has a more positive perception of the school discipline climate. It would be interesting to replicate this work in the United States, to see if the conclusions would be similar to the conclusions found in Hong Kong.

In a supportive environment teachers are more willing to take risks and make the
classroom more exciting and challenging for students. In an interview with Christine Emmons of the Yale Child Development Center (1997) she states, "I have found consistently that order and discipline and student interpersonal relations seem to be the school climate variables most in need of improvement."

School-Wide Discipline

Thomas Jefferson, an advocate of laissez-faire for students, visited the University of Virginia, for which he had a leadership role in founding. There was an incident of student disruption and protest during his visit. The students had been drinking heavily. An emotional eighty three year old Jefferson was left speechless, but later wrote in a letter to a friend, "at the age of 16 it is high time for youth to begin to learn and practice the duties of obedience to the laws of their country" (Wynne, 1994) Jefferson realized, as others do now, that support and love are not the only needs of students; they also need constraints and boundaries effectively prohibiting some forms of conduct.

In 1984, former Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell, cited discipline as the single most important priority for schools. There exists an equation (Binkly & Anton, 1984) in which a positive environment is the goal of discipline, and a positive environment fosters a disciplined atmosphere.

During most of its twenty two year existence, the Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, has identified "lack of discipline" as the most serious problem facing the nation's educational system (Cotton & Wikeland, 1990). Jones (1984) says, "discipline, most simply stated, is the business of enforcing simple classroom rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption."

Cotton and Wikeland (1990) reviewed sixty documents researching discipline in the
classroom and methods that improve school-wide and classroom discipline. They refer to James Aymes, who defines discipline as, “The slow, bit by bit, time-consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting in a certain way.” The elements found in safe, orderly, well managed schools are the results of the research of Cotton and Wikeland. These components are identified as:

1. Commitment on the part of all staff to establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior as an essential precondition to learning.

2. Warm school climate, characterized by a concern for students as individuals. Teachers and administrators take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students.

3. A visible, supportive principal.

4. Delegation of discipline authority to students. Teachers are held responsible for handling routine classroom discipline problems.

5. Close ties with communities.

Poorly disciplined schools drain the energies of both adult and child away from the central educational mission of teaching and learning (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992). Nothing will do more for faculty and morale than a well-run school and a disciplined student body. Teachers will feel good about the school and as a result have high expectations for their students.

There is a plethora of literature that describes the effects of a well-run, safe and disciplined student body. Research indicates a strong relationship between student achievement and limited time spent on management problems. Schools and classrooms in which students express positive feelings about learning and where student misbehavior
is limited, are characterized by higher student achievement. Another outcome of a well-disciplined school is a positive climate, which includes better teacher-teacher and teacher-principal relationships. Several themes have emerged from the research on effective school discipline (Short & Harris, 1988); the first theme reflects the importance of a total, unified school approach to establishing good discipline.

Schools need a behavior management system to provide a proper foundation for programs. A comprehensive behavior management system is a “building wide program that provides principals and teachers with training and written guidelines for the management of students during instruction, while participating in campus activities, and during acts of misbehavior” (Short & Harris, 1988). Most school districts, however, do not provide principals and teachers with an adequate blueprint to meet standards of behavior management set forth in professional literature.

School discipline is everyone’s responsibility (MacNaughton & Johns, 1991), and principals cannot control student behavior by themselves. Teachers and staff members must participate in the process and know their roles. Good school and classroom discipline is not necessarily something that is attained once and for all. Staff needs to keep working at management and discipline in much the same way they would curriculum development.

A study conducted by Ingersoll (1993) examined the relationship between teacher control and school environment. Data was obtained from the nationally representative 1988 Schools and Staffing Survey, collected by the United States Department of Education. The sample consisted of 24,480 secondary school teachers, and 5,292 secondary school administrators. In schools where faculty reported more control over the
social dimensions, both faculty and administration reported significantly less student misbehavior. Furthermore, the strongest predictor of staff unity was faculty influence over school discipline policy.

Findings from the Ingersoll study indicate that levels of teacher control were significantly associated with levels of school conflict. For discipline activities, as teacher control increases, the amount of perceived student disruption decreases. Of all the variables measured in this study, faculty control over decisions concerned with discipline was among the strongest predictors of reduced student conflict. Furthermore, the strongest predictor of staff unity was faculty influence over school discipline policy. The importance of teacher influence on discipline, rather than instructional decision making, is a key factor for creating a cohesive school environment. Classroom order is fundamental because without the maintenance of some degree of student discipline, instructional processes cannot proceed at all. Yet decisions concerning student discipline are typically regarded as of lesser importance than those concerned with instruction.

Schools that establish a total approach to discipline have principals who hold teachers responsible for handling routine discipline problems (Wayson, 1985). The 1983 Phi Delta Kappan Commission on Discipline to which Wayson contributed, spent two years studying five hundred well disciplined schools nationwide, to determine the significant elements in producing a well disciplined environment. Results indicated that in those schools, teachers take the leadership role in working through problems with students in routine discipline situations.

A three year program was implemented in eight middle schools in the Charleston County School District of South Carolina to cope with the high rates of student
misconduct (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993). The program sought to increase clarity of school rules and consistency of rule enforcement, increase classroom organization and management, increase the frequency of communication to the home regarding student behavior, and increase reinforcement for appropriate behavior. The program included school, classroom, and individual level interventions. The program attempted to tighten school policies and procedures regarding discipline.

Subjects in the study included all staff and students in the eight public middle schools in Charleston, South Carolina. Two of the eight schools were designated as comparison schools. Measures used to assess the level of implementation of program strategies were: school discipline records tracked by computer, classroom environment surveys administered to all teachers and students, plus teacher and student responses to the questionnaires of the Effective School Battery.

The results showed that activities and support for the school improvement programs varied from school to school, and the variation was predictable from informal assessments of building level support for the program during the planning year.

Discipline is at the heart of the instructional program because student misconduct directly affects instructional effectiveness and learning. Results from this experiment also suggest that decision making structures which allow workers with direct responsibility for implementing new practices to participate in planning and refining those practices, are effective for raising morale and for directing energy towards change.

Coping with students who display problems in personal and social adjustment can be frustrating. Success in teaching problem students often requires extra time, energy and patience. Research reviewed by Jones (1984) indicates that teachers rank individual
students who have serious or persistent behavior problems as their chief cause of stress. School level structures and policies affect classroom environments significantly, but in the end a productive classroom depends upon the teacher (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992).

A school discipline policy is the job of all involved. This refers to administrators, teachers and other staff members who should meet to discuss and develop ideas (Avellar-Fleming, 1994). Research repeatedly finds that schools with disciplined environments are distinguished by teacher participation in decision making. The resultant school-wide policy contributes to a positive environment because it sends a message to students that the school cares enough about them to carry on a fair and consistent disciplinary procedure.

There are several components of which a well-disciplined school is comprised. Parent involvement, student involvement, administrative support, and a well-written school-wide code are crucial (Lescault, 1998). These would not be effective, however, without the involvement of the teaching staff. Involvement is critical in the development of the sense of ownership that is a prerequisite in receiving the support necessary for the discipline code to be a useful tool. Actively involving employees in the definition of discipline invites their acceptance and assumption of their responsibility.

In a school system, every person may have a different idea of what constitutes appropriate behavior. Coping with and preventing discipline problems requires realizing that each person, each classroom, and each school has its own unique personality. Regardless, discipline must be considered a part of the curriculum of the school (Thomas, 1988). Staff members must therefore be involved in making day-to-day decisions that create the school's discipline climate.
Whether a school creates an ad hoc or standing faculty committee to fulfill the function of designing a discipline plan, doesn’t matter (Binkly & Anton, 1984). What does matter is that there is faculty input and support. A discipline plan rarely works if it is merely a dictate from the principal. A committee of administrators, teachers, parents and students should develop it. Staff members who feel uncommitted to a program can do much to minimize its effectiveness (Jones, 1984). Staff involvement can serve to improve the quality of staff relationships. Involving a wide range of staff members enhances the potential for an accurate diagnosis of the problem and for creative solutions.

Teacher Education

According to MacNaughton and Johns (1991), until recently most professors of education did not consider discipline a fundamental concern of teacher preparation. These researchers go on to state that any program on management and discipline can only be effective by involving teachers in the development of a school-wide discipline plan.

Teachers coming to the classroom of the nineties need the skills necessary to maintain student discipline. Yet teachers lack the skills needed to develop an effective discipline plan. In addition, regular education teachers more and more are interacting with “included” students with special needs. These students often require special management techniques that general education teachers indicate their preservice training program did not include. Too often, general education teachers lack knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students from special populations, due to a lack of training in specific interventions and strategies during their preservice course work (Eric Clearinghouse, 1986). Because the student population is becoming more and more diverse and demanding, university teacher education programs and state certification
departments must consider research findings and collaborate to develop better preservice programs (Garibaldi, 1992).

Fifty states were surveyed (Katsiyannis, Landrum, Bullock & Vinton, 1997) to assess the status and nature of certification requirements in emotional and behavioral disorders. The instrument used in this study was a brief survey developed by the authors that included four sections: simple demographic information, questions regarding the nature of certification for teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disorders, questions regarding the review of certification requirements, and questions regarding the number of teachers certified. Over half of the states reported the existence of certification in EBD, and an analysis of the nature of certification requirements reflected variability regarding the specificity or skill development necessary to serve as a teacher of students with EBD. Most professionals argue that state certification requirements serve only as a guide and reflect minimum competencies. Further research on teacher preparatory programs is necessary to provide a more accurate assessment of the nature and scope of the skills in which teachers must have competence to appropriately serve a population that constantly challenges our schools.

One study (McDaniel, 1987) indicated that almost all teachers know something about student behavior modification, and somewhere in their training they have learned the importance of positive reinforcement. Teachers, however, seldom use these practices because in their teacher education courses they have seldom been instructed in how to apply such principles to improve discipline and classroom management.

Jones and Black (1998) conducted a study to examine state certification requirements for regular and vocational teachers regarding students with disabilities,
disadvantages and multicultural backgrounds. Results suggested that supervisors did not consider the certification requirements to be adequate for preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities, disadvantages, and multicultural backgrounds. Preservice teachers in many states take courses concerning special populations, but these courses are not mandated. Jones and Black suggested that universities should offer more courses that prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations, and should include more practical and field based experiences.

Given the extensive research that has demonstrated the important relationship between teacher input in establishing effective discipline and resultant improvement in school climate and student achievement, it stands to reason that a significant component of teacher education would be student management techniques, or discipline strategies for the classroom. Yet there is evidence (Pilarski, 1994) that student teachers are often preoccupied with concern that preservice programs do not prepare them adequately for addressing behavioral problems of students. Indeed, a comprehensive literature search revealed little information regarding preparing teachers in preservice for the realities of student conduct they would encounter in the classroom.

Levin (1984) reports on the results of his study from 71 teachers. Analysis indicated that teachers recognize the need for competence in classroom management and are receptive to more training in this area. Analysis of data noted teachers’ perceptions of the causes of discipline problems, the types and frequency of discipline problems and various intervention strategies used.

A study conducted by Schelski and Deno (1994) determined that content specific seminars operated in conjunction with a student teaching program would result in more
effective teaching behaviors than compared with discussion seminars based on educational issues less directly related to effective teaching. The results of this study have implications for teacher education programs. These programs could improve student achievement of student teacher’s pupils and develop more effective classroom managers if they implemented training programs that focused on effective classroom management behaviors.

Despite evidence of the concern of the public, and the concern of student teachers regarding teacher effectiveness in maintaining student management, teacher education in this area remains minimal. Wesley and Vocke (1992) presented a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators. Their exhaustive search of the literature revealed little evidence to suggest how preservice teachers acquire their knowledge about the topic of classroom discipline. Wesley and Vocke concluded that prospective teachers are likely to learn about the topic of classroom discipline in courses that cover a wide range of topics and not in a separate course that deals specifically with discipline theories, strategies or techniques.

Similar results were obtained in a qualitative investigation by Latz (1992) which involved sixteen prospective teachers. In this study preservice science and mathematics teachers’ perceptions and concerns about classroom management and discipline were investigated. Results reveal that undergraduate students do not have a clear understanding of classroom management and therefore look for quick fix solutions to discipline problems.

Some researchers have turned their attention to the question of whether significant improvements in classroom discipline could be achieved through the provision of teacher
training in validated techniques (Cotton & Wiklund, 1990). These training programs have proven very successful in bringing about reduction of discipline problems in the classrooms of participating teachers.

To provide data for changes currently being implemented in Chicago public schools, a study examined the effect of teachers’ attitudes on student discipline problems (Greenlee & Ogletree, 1993). Information was obtained from fifty elementary and secondary school teachers. Teachers were questioned regarding their perceptions of the characteristics of students viewed as discipline problems, attitudes towards classroom management strategies, attitude toward the most frequently occurring discipline problems, attitude toward major causes of discipline problems, and attitude toward strategies to improve student discipline.

The survey used was the SDCMS, Student Discipline Classroom Management Strategy (Levin, 1984), adapted to address the above five areas. Results were tabulated in terms of percentage, the chi square .05 level of confidence. Three significant findings resulted from this study. First, that good teachers must be competent in curbing disruptive behavior in the classroom. Second, stress related to classroom management is the most influential factor in failure among novice teachers. Third, teachers need more skill and training in how to deal with disruptive classroom behavior. This research provides some evidence that teachers’ attitudes toward discipline problems can affect the educational organization.

In 1994 the Education Department of the State University of New York, College of Oneonta, instituted “Early Field Experiences” for elementary education majors (Edwards, 1996). Students are required to complete forty hours of field observations in a
variety of service agency and school settings. The benefit of this program is to increase awareness of students of the varied sociological and psychological elements many children bring into the classroom. By visiting various schools, college students observe both effective and ineffective ways of working with troubled children.

Unlike doctors, lawyers, accountants, or architects, all teachers do not have the same training (Darling-Hammond, 1996). While some teachers have very high levels of skills, along with course work in teaching, learning, curriculum and child development; others learn little about any of these areas. There is no real uniform system for recruiting, preparing, and developing America's teachers.

Teacher education is woefully inadequate to prepare teachers for challenges of the next decade. Recognizing this inadequacy, a Center for the Study of School Discipline Management is being established on the campus of Eastern Michigan University (Lounsburg & Josar, 1998). Professors and researchers nationwide are being invited to share ideas about school-wide discipline programs. Through this center teachers and administrators will be able to receive training in effective means of dealing with student discipline. According to Trevor Gardner, professor at Eastern Michigan (Lounsburg & Josar, 1998) few schools have been willing to address discipline codes on a school wide basis.

A survey of service teachers (Edwards, 1996) and administrators who are experienced in the evaluations of the shortcomings of first year teachers, pointed to specific elements needed for beginning teachers. These are faculty and facility introductions, classroom management, student discipline, and professional obligations.

Beginning teachers as well as experienced teachers need help in developing skills
and knowledge that are instrumental in accomplishing the predictable day-to-day tasks of teaching. Essential features of preparation would include specific courses and experiences in classroom management, and provide the opportunity to demonstrate ability to use theory to solve common problems (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Hoy and Woolfolk found a link between teachers’ sense of efficacy and orderly behavior of students. Their work suggests that teachers define success in both academic and affective ways.

Teacher education has changed little over the past half century (Doyle, 1996). Teacher educators, according to Doyle, are institutionally insulated and have been under little pressure to change. State licensing requirements reinforce inertia. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future may change this in the future. The Commission proposes that standards for teacher education be developed by the private, nonprofit National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Conclusion

Research of the literature reveals that there is a school climate, and there is consensus that positive school discipline plays an important part in contributing to a healthy climate. Furthermore, there is agreement that school-wide discipline should be developed by classroom teachers to be effective. It must be noted, however, that school climate is a complex topic that is examined from several different point of views.

Some researchers conclude that climate must be measured from a compilation of staff, parent and student responses. Some researchers draw a distinction between school climate from the response of individuals in a school and the perception of how the individuals think other staff members view climate. Some research distinguishes
between climate and teacher job satisfaction. A chart has been constructed to summarize the various measures of instruments of school climate (See Table 2).

Table 2

**Measures of Climate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument/Researcher</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESB (Effective School Battery), Gottfredson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Climate Inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW Educ. Develop’t. Lab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP (School Climate Survey, Comer)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SII (School Improvement Inv. (Iowa State U.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDSC (School Discipline Climate (Grossnickle)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHI (Organizational Health Inv., Hoy and Tartar</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSCI (Tennessee School Inv.)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASSP</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this study the individual response of teachers is used to measure the school
climate.

Most teachers tend to learn student management techniques while on the job, rather than in the course of their preservice training. Participating in the development of school-wide discipline policy should increase teachers' sense of a positive school climate and concurrently raise the student achievement levels in a school.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Due to the alarming increase in the rate of student misconduct in schools it is crucial for teachers to feel confident in their ability to effectively handle student discipline. In special education schools, where students with emotional and behavioral disorders are placed, teachers are presented with additional challenges. These teachers must be especially secure in their knowledge of discipline techniques and student management.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether teacher perception of their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affects their perception of school climate in three special education schools in New Jersey. Subsidiary questions ask (1) whether the amount of teacher preparation for student management in the classroom affects their perception of climate (2) whether teacher gender affects perception of school climate, and (3) is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building?

In this chapter the rationale for the schools selected will be presented. The subjects selected for the study will be described. The instruments used to survey the subjects will be described along with the methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter will include steps taken in preparation for the Institutional Review Board.
Procedure

It was determined that an effective place to study the relationship of teacher perception of their personal authority for school-wide discipline with students with emotional and behavioral disorders and teacher perception of climate, was in schools operated by educational services commissions in New Jersey. These schools are designed specifically for students who have been identified as presenting emotional and behavioral disorders. Letters were sent to the superintendents of three such commissions in New Jersey, and approval was granted by them to further pursue this study by contacting the principals of the schools (Appendix A).

The letter sent to the three principals (Appendix B) was similar to the letter sent to the superintendents. It outlined the nature of the study, explained that teacher participation would be completely voluntary, and that neither the name of the schools, nor names of any participants would be used in any way in this study. After the principals indicated their willingness to cooperate, they were then sent an additional letter asking them for some information regarding demographics relating to their specific school and faculty, plus a request for them to mail their school brochures or student manuals to the researcher for study. (Appendix C). Two principals supplied the researcher with school handbooks that included school mission statements, while no such information was available for the third school. The three principals supplied the data obtained regarding school demographics.

A letter of introduction from the researcher was sent to the teaching staff of the three schools (Appendix D). Times were arranged with the principals for the researcher to visit the schools and meet with the teachers to explain the study and distribute additional
letters of information and consent to the teachers. Teachers were assured that they were under no obligation to participate, and would suffer no consequences should they choose not to complete the surveys. The surveys were left in the schools for the teachers to complete, were collected at the schools by school personnel, and were returned by mail to the researcher.

The Schools

Three schools were selected for this study from three counties in New Jersey. They are representative of special education schools which specifically address the needs of students with emotional/behavioral disorders. Each school is defined as a receiving school because students are sent there from different school districts in the county.

Each school is operated by an educational services commission. There are ten educational services commissions in New Jersey and all are governed by the same legislative policy and share a common mission. That is, the commissions are public bodies brought into existence for the purpose of providing educational services to school districts in a cost effective manner. The commissions enter into contracts with public school districts to provide auxiliary and remedial services for handicapped pupils.

Student population of the schools is summarized. (See Table 3) The teacher population is summarized. (See Table 4)

School 1

The school's mission, as stated in its handbook, is to demonstrate a strong commitment to providing a comprehensive, supportive and integrated educational experience for all classified students enrolled at the academy, inclusive of a full curriculum. The staff, sending districts and community accept the
### Table 3

**Student Population of Three Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>School # 1</th>
<th>School # 2</th>
<th>School # 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifications</td>
<td>ED, NI</td>
<td>ED, NI, PI, MH</td>
<td>ED, NI, PI, MH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># on free lunch</td>
<td>41 (61%)</td>
<td>37 (100%)</td>
<td>61 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># on probation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of classes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4

**Teacher Population of Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>School #1</th>
<th>School #2</th>
<th>School #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Teachers</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Teachers</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
responsibility and challenge to provide a creative, positive and structured learning environment for every child. It is a major tenet of our philosophy that all of the students will master the essential skills needed to become successful, motivated learners who will in turn become productive responsible members of society. An emphasis is to be placed on work habits, self-control, social skills, academic attainment, and attainment of personal goals.

According to information supplied by the principal, school 1 receives 67 students from 14 districts, from both urban and suburban municipalities. Students come from a cross section of socio-economic levels. Lower socio-economic status is indicated by the 41 students who receive free lunch from the federal lunch program. To be eligible for free lunch family income must be verified as below a certain monthly income established by the federal government. Students who attend school 1 range in age from 7-19, and have been classified either emotionally disturbed or neurologically impaired by their child study teams. Fifty four students are male, 13 students are female. Fifteen students are involved with the juvenile justice system and are on probation.

In school 1 there are five self-contained classes and five departmentalized classes. In self-contained classes, students receive all their academic subjects from the same teacher and remain in the same classroom most of the day. In departmentalized classes, students move from class- to- class and are taught by different teachers for different subjects.

School 1 has a teaching staff of 13 certified teachers. Their certifications include teacher of the handicapped, teacher of art, teacher of home economics, and teacher of
physical education. None of these teachers have degrees beyond the bachelor of art degree. There are ten paraprofessionals or teacher aides in school 1 whose job it is to assist the classroom teacher. Before admittance to school, students participate in an interview with the building administrator, parent, and child study team member of the sending district.

School 2

This facility has a total of 37 students; 31 male and 7 female. The students range in age from 13 to 20 years old and are classified by their respective child study teams as either emotionally disturbed, perceptually impaired, neurologically impaired or multiply handicapped. Of the 37 students, 8 are presently on probation. A mission statement was not supplied from this school.

Students are sent to school 2 from both urban and suburban districts in the county. The classes are divided into one self-contained classroom and four departmentalized classrooms.

There are 12 certified teachers in this school. Their certifications include teacher of the handicapped, industrial art, art, home economics and physical education. Three teachers have earned credit beyond the bachelor of art degree. Four paraprofessionals are employed at school 2.

School 3

School 3 is located in a third county and receives students from both urban and suburban districts. It has the following mission statement:

The (school) provides high quality specialized educational opportunities within a therapeutic environment, creating maximum opportunities for students to attain
academic and behavioral skills necessary for success as a member of a main-
stream society.

The total student population, 126, is comprised of 116 males and 10 females. These students range in age from 5 to 21. Students have been classified by their child study teams as emotionally disturbed, neurologically impaired, perceptually impaired and multiply handicapped. Sixty one students are eligible for free lunch. There are 27 students known to be on probation and thus involved with the juvenile justice system.

Of the eighteen classes in school 3, 10 are self-contained, and 4 are departmentalized. Of the 24 teachers in school 3, 13 have credits beyond the bachelor of arts degree. Certifications include teacher of the handicapped, physical education, science and art.

The Sample

The sample consists of thirty six teachers who completed both the NASSP School Climate Survey (Halderson, Kelley & Keefe, 1987) and the questionnaire developed by the researcher. The sample consisted of fifteen male and twenty one female respondents, totaling 72% of the entire teaching staff of the combined three schools. The teachers in this sample are representative of teachers in New Jersey who hold either the teacher of the handicapped certificate or subject specific certificate, and teach in special education schools specifically designed for students with emotional/behavioral disorders.

Initial information regarding teacher sample was provided by school principals in response to a letter sent by the researcher (Appendix C). Information regarding the respondents was verified through the teacher survey.
Collection of Data

All the teachers in the three schools were contacted by letter regarding their participation in this study (Appendix D). The letter explained the researcher’s affiliation with Seton Hall University and explained the nature of the study. It further explained that participation would be completely voluntary and that their names would not be used as part of the study in any way. Teachers were assured that all answers were valuable, and that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. The procedure was outlined regarding the completion of the climate study and teacher questionnaire that make up the study.

Meetings with the teachers were planned at the three schools. At the meetings teachers received instruction letters by the researcher and were given a chance to ask questions. They were reassured by the researcher that their participation was voluntary and all responses would be anonymous and confidential. Although the researcher requested to be present to monitor the administration of the instruments, all three principals preferred to have the instruments administered under their sole supervision. The researcher was not present during the actual administration of the instruments and it is, therefore, difficult to ascertain why some staff did not participate in the completing of the instruments.

Teachers were asked to complete their surveys within a certain time frame and were told where in the school to submit their completed packet. Completion time was determined by a volunteer pilot group of ten teachers to ascertain the approximate time it would take to complete the two surveys. Average time to complete both surveys was ten minutes total.
Instrumentation

School Climate Survey

An extensive review of the literature was conducted to determine the climate instrument that would best provide information regarding teacher perceptions of their school climate. Although numerous instruments have been developed to measure climate, few provide reliability or validity documentation. The School Climate Survey, part of the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (Halderson, Kelley & Keefe, 1987), was selected because of the rigorous field testing and data analysis which was conducted by the task force created for that purpose. It must be noted; however, that none of the referenced instruments show statistical analysis indicating what factors are considered most important in participants’ minds for a positive climate.

The NASSP School Climate Survey was developed at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. An item bank was created for the development of the instrument. The item bank was generated from a comprehensive review of both the climate and effective schools literature and an analysis of existing climate instruments used by both researchers and practitioners. Following two pilot tests, two forms of the instrument were further refined in a national pilot study. A second national study was conducted to collect normative data for form A of the instrument. (Halderson & Kelley, 1989). The School Climate Survey is normed for use by students in grades 6-12, and for use with teachers, and parent or citizen groups. For this study, the teacher portion is used exclusively.

The NASSP School Climate Survey collects data about perceptions on 10 subscales:
1. **Teacher-Student Relationships.** Perceptions about the quality of the interpersonal and professional relationships between teachers and students.

2. **Security and Maintenance.** Perceptions about the quality of maintenance and the degree of security people feel at the school.

3. **Administration.** Perceptions of the degree to which school administrators are effective in communicating with the different role groups and in setting high performance expectations for teachers and students.

4. **Student Academic Orientation.** Perceptions about student attention to task and concern for achievement at school.

5. **Student Behavioral Values.** Perceptions about student self-discipline and tolerance for others.

6. **Guidance.** Perceptions of the quality of academic and career guidance and personal counseling services available to students.

7. **Student-Peer Relationships.** Perceptions about students' care and respect for one another and their mutual cooperation.

8. **Parent and Community – School Relationships.** Perceptions of the amount and quality of involvement in the school of parents and other community members.

9. **Instructional Management.** Perceptions of the efficiency and effectiveness of teacher classroom organization and use of classroom time.

10. **Student Activities.** Perceptions about opportunities for and actual participation of students in school-sponsored activities.

Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) have been calculated for each subscale. The average internal consistency reliability of the climate subscales is 0.81,
with a range from 0.67 to 0.92. Both content and construct validity were established by the task force which was created to design this instrument.

The task force formulated a general model depicting the contextual, input, mediating, and outcome variables of school environments (Halderson, Kelley & Keefe, 1989). This model would also be known as an open system (Hoy & Miskel, 1978). The task force intended to clarify areas identified as unclear and accepted the following assumptions in the formulation of their model:

1. The building is the appropriate unit for analysis.
2. Climate and satisfaction are two related, but distinct, concepts.
3. Student outcomes (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) and school cost effectiveness data are the appropriate measures of the degree to which a school is effective.

The School Climate Survey is hand scored. A six-response Likert scale is employed. Items receive score values of 1 (strongly disagree, very dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly agree, very satisfied). All items are regularly scored, and items marked 6 (Don’t know) are not included in the scoring. The survey is divided into 10 subscales and a total test raw score is produced by adding the numerical value of each of the 55 items that make up the complete test. For the purpose of this study raw scores were not converted to standard scores because subtest results are not being compared, nor are the results of this survey being compared to student or parent surveys.

Teacher Survey

Review of the literature revealed no instrumentation specifically designed to gather information regarding teacher preservice preparation for dealing with student
behavior. A questionnaire was thus developed by the researcher to obtain information regarding teacher undergraduate preparation in dealing with student behavior, as well as their perceptions of who is responsible for schoolwide discipline in their schools. (Appendix E). The questionnaire was piloted in a commission school other than the schools used in this study. The survey was administered to a sample of 10 volunteer special education teachers to address such issues as clarity, length of time to take the survey, and question comprehensiveness.

Surveys are a means of soliciting information, based on the simple maxim, if you want to know what people think, ask them (Porter & Coggin, 1995). Survey research is a tool for collecting information. One type of information obtained by surveys is factual data about the respondents themselves. These may include questions about a person’s educational background, religious affiliation, etc. A second type of information could be collected to ascertain if certain variables indicate a relationship with the primary hypothesis. Information gathering of both types is included in the researcher-authored survey.

The survey format was selected for this study because surveys can be implemented in a timely fashion, are amenable to quantification and subsequent computerization and statistical analysis, plus often have the advantage of replicability (Witte & Witte, 1997).

In the study-design stage of survey research, the population is of critical importance. The people chosen to respond to the survey should reflect research objectives. For this survey, all certified teaching staff of three special education schools made up the sample to be surveyed. Good survey questions have two important qualities:
reliability and validity. A question is reliable if it evokes consistent responses. The validity of a question is determined by whether the question actually measures the concept of interest. Reliability and validity in this instrument were established by the consistency of teacher responses to the demographic information provided by the principals.

Items for this questionnaire were both open ended and close ended, or open ended within a close ended format. Close-ended questions provide a list of alternative choices and ask the respondents to select one or more of them as indicative of the best possible answer. Open-ended questions have no preexisting response categories and permit the respondent a great deal of latitude in responding to them. (Porter & Coggin, 1995).

Variables in this survey have measurement scales that are nominal, ordinal and interval. The key substantive issues that make up the foundation of this survey instrument are identified in the problem statement in Chapter 1, and identified throughout the review of the literature.

The first questions of the teacher questionnaire were designed to elicit descriptive information about the respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate from the choices (1) what certifications they held (2) how many years of professional teaching experience they had (3) how many years they have been teaching in this facility and (4) gender. Later questions solicited the respondent's opinion about circumstances in school regarding student discipline and teacher preparation for dealing with behavioral issues of students. Question 5 asked whether their teacher education curriculum provided training in student management and if so, how much. In question 6 respondents were asked to rank the order from 1 to 5 how they think a teacher best learns about discipline. Question
7 asks if there is a school-wide discipline program in the school and if so who designed and implements it. Question 8 asks the respondents to note whether or not they agree with a statement that says they have authority and responsibility to design and implement school-wide discipline in the school where they teach. Thus the questions have been designed to go in order from simple, concrete responses to responses that require more thought on the part of the respondent.

Anonymity of respondents was preserved by utilizing a number system. Participants were assigned a random number for all instruments keeping their test set in one Respondent Packet, thereby obviating the necessity for other identifying information.

Design and Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine whether teacher perception of their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affects their perception of school climate in three special education schools in New Jersey. Additionally, this study examined whether the amount of teacher preparation for student management in the classroom affects their perception of school climate. The factor of gender as an influence on teacher perception of school climate was examined. Finally, this study considered the influence of the years of teaching experience and the years in the building as impacting on teacher perception of school climate.

The data was first examined for aggregate findings. This was done by pooling the responses of the teachers of the three schools to form one sample representative of special education teachers in schools for students with emotional/behavioral disorders operated by educational services commissions in New Jersey. The commissions are consortiums
of school districts formed to provide cost effective educational programming for member
districts. Data was then examined by comparing results of the three individual schools.

The aggregate data was examined by 2 two-way ANOVAs. The first two-way
ANOVA design investigated interactions of the variables of teacher perceptions of
discipline responsibility and teacher gender and their affect on measures of school
climate. The second two-way ANOVA investigated the amount of teacher preservice
training and gender and their affect on measures of school climate. The ANOVA design
assumed that (1) mean score for teachers who perceive their authority for discipline
responsibility and the mean score for teachers not perceiving their authority for discipline
responsibility will be equal on measures of school climate (2) mean score for teachers not
having discipline training and those teachers having discipline training will be equal on
measures school climate. Preservice training refers to teacher undergraduate course
work. It was assumed that there was normality of population with equal variances from
independent random samples.

ANOVA 1

ANOVA 1 looks at two factors with two levels for each. The first factor is
perception of responsibility. This is divided into two levels; those who perceive they have
little or no responsibility to design and implement a school-wide discipline program and
those who perceive that they have responsibility to design and implement a school-wide
discipline program. The respondent’s category was determined by response to question
#8 on the cover survey: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “strongly agree” and 5 is
“strongly disagree” circle the appropriate number for the following statement:

“ I have the authority and responsibility to design and implement school-wide
discipline in the school where I teach.”

Those who responded with 1 or 2 (strongly agree) were categorized as teachers who perceive that they have responsibility for discipline. Those who responded with 3, 4 or 5 were categorized as teachers who perceive that they have little or no responsibility for discipline.

The second factor of gender was determined by the response to question #4 on the cover survey.

Hypothesis:

The following hypotheses generated to answer the stated questions were tested at the .05 level of significance:

The first hypothesis states that teacher perception of responsibility for discipline will have an affect on a measure of school climate. It is further hypothesized that gender has an affect on measures of climate, and that there is an interaction affect between gender and perceptions of responsibility on measures of climate.

ANOVA 2

ANOVA 2 consists of two factors with two levels for each. The first factor examines the amount of teacher preservice training their education curriculum provided in student management/discipline. This was determined by response to question #5 on the research-authored survey:

Did your teacher education curriculum provide training in student management/discipline?  ____Yes  ____No

Response is either yes, indicating the respondent did have preservice training in student management/discipline, or no, indicating that the respondent did not have
preservice training in student management/discipline.

The second factor of respondent gender was determined by the response to item #4 on the cover survey.

**Hypothesis**

For ANOVA 2 the following hypotheses generated to answer the stated questions were tested at the .05 level of significance:

The hypothesis states that little or no preservice discipline training will have an effect on teachers' perception on a measure of climate. Further, is it hypothesized that gender has an effect on measures of climate, and that there is an interaction effect between gender and perceptions of teachers that they had little or no preservice discipline training on a measure of climate.

No specific hypotheses were formulated concerning years of teacher experience or years of teacher experience in a specific school although this information was gathered and will be presented.

Data was further examined by comparing results found in the three individual schools. First, tables were constructed for each school. Each of the three tables has information obtained for every respondent in the school (see pages 81, 82, and 83). The tables describe the respondent's (1) gender, (2) years of teaching experience, (3) years of teaching in the specific building, (4) the amount of preservice training in discipline reported by the respondent, (5) whether the respondent had perceived authority for discipline in the school, and (6) the individual climate score obtained for each respondent.

Further information obtained from the individual schools includes the mean
climate score for each school and various percentages. These percentages summarize the percent of teachers in each school who perceive they have authority for discipline and the percent of teachers in each school who reported having preservice training in discipline.

Bar graphs were constructed to display information about the teachers in each building. One comparison graph displays the percentages of perceptions of authority and report of amount of preservice training teachers obtained in each school building (Figure 1). One graph compares the number of years of teaching experience of the subjects in the three schools (Figure 2), one graph compares the number of years the teachers in each building have been teaching in that building (Figure 3).

A one way analysis of variance was designed to compare the climate scores of the three schools. The one way ANOVA tested at the .05 level of significance, whether school climate in the three schools was the same. For this analysis of variance it was assumed that three independent samples were collected, that normality of the populations existed, and that homogeneity of variance existed. To reject the hypothesis that school climate was the same in all three schools and no significant difference existed in the climate score, it was calculated that an F score greater than 3.290 was needed.

In summary, data was first examined by pooling the respondents of the three schools and treating responses as one sample. Data was then separated to allow for examination of responses by a comparison of the results yielded by the three schools.
Figure 1

Percent of Teachers by School of Perceived Authority and Discipline Training.
Figure 2

Years of Teaching Experience of Teachers in Three Schools.

[Bar chart showing years of teaching experience for School 1, School 2, and School 3.]
Figure 3

Number of Years of Teachers in Each of Three Schools.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether teacher perception of their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing a school-wide behavior discipline system affects their perception of school climate in special education schools. Based upon this premise, the following research questions were investigated:

1. Does teacher perception of their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affect the climate of a school?

2. Does the amount of preservice training teachers have regarding student discipline affect their perceptions of the climate of the school?

3. Does teacher gender affect the perception of teachers regarding school climate?

4. Is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building?

The researcher sought to measure the climate of three special education schools in three different counties in New Jersey. Each of these three schools is operated by an educational services commission. Although there are ten educational services in New Jersey, these three were selected because of the similarities of the population of the counties in which they are located. The governance of the schools, the communities in
which they are located, and the student population which they serve have been determined to be similar in nature. The students in these schools have been classified by child study teams and removed from their respective home schools. For the most part, their classifications include emotional/behavioral disorders. There are students in all three schools whose participation in the national school lunch program indicate a low socio-economic level. There are students in all three schools who are on probation through the criminal justice system.

All three schools operate as public schools in New Jersey. They are tuition driven, and tuition is paid by the sending school districts, who are also obligated to pay for student transportation. Counseling services are available to the students in all three schools. Although the three schools are rather small in size, school 2 is smallest with a student body of 37 in 5 classes. School 1 has 67 students in 10 classes, and school 3 has 126 students in 14 classes.

The teachers in the three schools are all certified by the state of New Jersey. Certifications include teacher of the handicapped and/or specific content area such as physical education, art, home economics. Teachers range in the amount of their teaching experience, the number of years in the building, and the amount of preservice training they have reported for student management and discipline. Principals in all three schools report the existence of behavior programs throughout the schools.

The instrument selected to measure school climate was the School Climate Survey, part of the Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE) published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. This instrument was selected because of the rigorous field testing that was conducted to establish
reliability and validity of the instrument. The instrument was administered to more than 1,500 teachers. Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) have been calculated for each subscale based on data collected in pilot and normative studies. The average internal consistency reliability of the climate subscales is 0.81, with a range from 0.67 to 0.83.

Descriptive information pertaining to the respondents completing the School Climate Survey was obtained through the completion of a survey prepared by the researcher (Appendix E). Eight items were included in this questionnaire to determine: (1) gender of teacher, (2) type of certification, (3) years of teaching experience as well as (4) experience in the present facility, (5) amount of teacher preservice preparation in student management/discipline, (6) who the teacher perceives is responsible for the design of the school discipline system, and (7) whether or not the teacher feels authority for implementation of the system. Demographic information from the teacher survey was verified by information furnished to the researcher from the building principals (Appendix C).

The combined number of certified teachers in the three schools totaled 49, seventeen male and 32 female teachers. A total of thirty-six teachers participated in this study by completing the two survey instruments. Of the thirty-six teachers, fifteen were male and twenty-one were female.

The thirty-six teachers differed in their number of total years of teaching experience, the number of years they worked in their respective buildings, and the amount of training they received in their undergraduate curriculum regarding student management/discipline. Of the 33% percent of the teachers having 1-5 years of teaching
experience, 33% had that experience within the facility they were presently teaching. This data regarding descriptions of the teaching staff is presented on pages 68, 69, and 70 (See Figures 4, 5, and 6). As these variables were not in the hypothesis they are presented for descriptive purposes. However, this data indicates relationships of potential interest to school climate; specifically the higher raw score on the Climate Survey of teachers with 11-15 years of experience points to the possibilities for future research and analysis to further examine this relationship.

Data Analysis - Aggregate

The analyses are discussed below as they pertain to the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis stated that the perception of teacher responsibility would have an effect on school climate as measured by The School Climate Survey. Respondents were divided by gender. Perception of responsibility was divided into two levels, those males and females who perceived they have little or no responsibility to design and implement a school-wide discipline program and those males and females who perceived that they have responsibility to design and implement a school-wide discipline program. Perception was measured by question 8 on the research-authored teacher survey.

A Likert scale was used for question 8. Respondents chose from 1, strongly agree to 5, strongly disagree that “I have the authority and responsibility to design and implement school-side discipline in the school where I teach.” A two way analysis of variance was used, with randomly created equal cell size. Significance was calculated at the .05 level.
Figure 4

Frequency Distribution of Years of Teaching Experience.
Figure 5.

Frequency Distribution of Years of Teaching in Present Facility.

[Bar graph showing the distribution of years in building]
Figure 6.

*Amount of Teacher Preservice in Student Management/Discipline.*

![Graph showing the amount of course work in student management/discipline](image-url)
Hypothesis One was not supported in the analysis of the data. The analysis did not show any significant effects on school climate by teacher perception of their responsibility for designing and implementing a school-wide discipline program. This means that teachers who perceived they have responsibility as opposed to teachers who perceived they do not have responsibility will view the school climate the same. There was no interaction effect between gender and teacher perception of their responsibility to design and implement a school-wide discipline program. Interaction refers to the difference between the means of male and female teachers in the no responsibility group and the mean difference between the responses of the male and female in the responsibility group. Lack of interaction signifies sameness between the groups and results in no significant difference in scores based on gender.

Raw score totals were obtained from the School Climate Survey. (See Table 5) Once tabulated, the raw score totals are presented according to males who perceived they had no responsibility for discipline, males who perceived they had responsibility for discipline, females who perceived they had no responsibility and females who perceived they had responsibility. Mean scores for perception of responsibility for school-wide discipline are presented. (See table 6)

Analysis of variance was calculated at .05 level of significance and is summarized. (See table 7) The F value for responsibility of 3.99, though not significant, was close to the critical value of 4.742. One wonders if a larger sample would have produced a significant outcome.

To reject the first null hypothesis an F value greater than 4.4940 would have to be obtained. An F score of .43 was obtained. Therefore, the null is not rejected. Rejection
### Table 5

**Raw Scores Measured by School Climate Survey - Perception of Responsibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>NONE</th>
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<td>216</td>
<td>193</td>
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<td>149</td>
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<td>224</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>FEMALE</th>
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<th>SOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
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### Table 6

**Mean Scores for Perception of Responsibility**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>215.25</th>
<th>187.5</th>
<th>201.38</th>
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<tr>
<td>177.25</td>
<td>191.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>196.25</td>
<td>189.38</td>
<td>192.81</td>
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</table>
Table 7

Summary of Two-Way Analysis of Variance of Teacher Perception of Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
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<th>SOURCE of variability</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tr>
<td>Between Responsibility</td>
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<td>189.06</td>
<td>189.06</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Gender</td>
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<td>1173.06</td>
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<td>Interaction</td>
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<td>8344.44</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
of the null hypothesis is further substantiated by the high variability within each of the
cells, as indicated by the high MS error.

Hypothesis 2. This stated that the amount of teacher training in student discipline
would have an effect on their perception of school climate as measured by the School
Climate Survey. Amount of teacher training was obtained by teacher response to question
5 on the research-authored survey. Respondents indicated either yes or no regarding
whether their teacher education curriculum provided training in student
management/discipline. Amount of training was divided into two levels, those who
reported they had little or no training in student discipline and those who reported they
had adequate training in student discipline. Little training was defined as those who
received training in management and discipline as part of another course. Adequate
training is defined as one or more separate courses dealing in student
management/discipline. A summary of the raw score totals was obtained from the School
Climate Survey. (See Table 8) Once tabulated, the raw score totals are presented
according to males who had training in discipline, males who did not have training,
females who had training and females who did not have training. (See Table 9)

A two way analysis of variance was calculated at .05 level of significance, and is
summarized (See table 10) Hypothesis Two was not supported in the analysis of the data.
The analysis did not show any significant effects on perception of school climate by the
amount of teacher training in student discipline. There was no interaction effect between
gender and the amount of teacher training in student discipline. This means that teachers
who had training in discipline as opposed to teacher who have not had training will view
the school climate the same. Thus, a teacher's training is not a factor that impacts
perception of school climate. No interaction means the difference between males and females who had training is the same as the difference between males and females who did not have training.

Table 8

**Raw Scores Measured by School Climate Survey – Perception of Training**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HAD TRAINING</th>
<th>NO TRAINING</th>
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<td>229</td>
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Table 9

**Means for Perception of Training**

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<th>192.2</th>
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<td>186.8</td>
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<td>194.6</td>
<td>184.4</td>
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Table 10

**Summary of Two-Way Analysis of Variance for Teacher Training**

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<tr>
<th>SOURCE of Variability</th>
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<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>520.2</td>
<td>520.2</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>145.8</td>
<td>145.8</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>217.8</td>
<td>217.8</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9117.2</td>
<td>569.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10,001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To reject the second null hypothesis an F value greater than 4.4940 would have to be obtained. An F value of .91 was obtained. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Further, there was high variability within each of the cells, indicated by the mean square error. However, the table of means for this hypothesis, presented in indicates a 10.2 difference between those that had training and those who did not. (See Table 9 page 78).

Though not significant, this score is in the direction the researcher expected. Again, one wonders if the researcher had been able to take a larger sample involving less variance within each cell if this difference might have been significant.

Hypothesis 3. This stated that teacher gender has an effect on school climate as measured by the School Climate Survey. In both of the two way analysis of variance there was no gender effect, meaning the difference between males and females is not the same between the group with no responsibility and the group with responsibility. However, in both tables regarding perception of responsibility and amount of training the males scored higher than the females. Though not significant at the .05 level there is an interesting tendency worthy of note. The lack of significance appears to be due to the high variability of the variance within each cell, as indicated by the high mean square error. The males had means higher than the females in particular in the table describing means of perception of responsibility. Here there is a 17 point difference between male and female. Though not significant at the .05 level it raises a point of interest warranting further research.

When the respondents for the three schools are pooled together to make one sample, data does not support the stated hypotheses. This means that the variables under
consideration do not influence teacher perception of school climate. These variables are perception of responsibility and authority for implementing and designing school-wide behavior plans, amount of preservice training in student management/discipline, and teacher gender.

Data Analysis of Separate Schools

The breakdown of demographic information for the respondents in the three different schools was obtained from the research-authored survey and is presented in the next pages (See Tables 11, 12, 13). School 1 yielded a mean climate score of 176.8. It had the lowest percentile of teachers, 8%, who perceived they had authority for school discipline. School 1 had the highest percentage, 83%, of teachers who reported having preservice discipline training.

In school 2 the mean climate score was 189. In this school 17% of the teachers perceived they had responsibility for discipline, while 41% reported having preservice training.

The highest mean climate score, 194, was yielded in school 3. In this school 45% of the teachers perceived that they had authority for discipline, and 82% reported that they had preservice discipline training.

The comparison of authority and amount of training of the teachers in the three schools is depicted. (See Figure 1 page 63) The highest climate score appears in school 3, which has the highest percentage of teachers who perceived authority as well as a high 82% of teachers who reported discipline training. This indicates that the combination of perceiving authority for discipline and having preservice training in that area may contribute to a teacher’s perception of a positive climate.
Table 11

Profile of School 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th># 4 Gender</th>
<th># 2 Years of Exp.</th>
<th># 3 Years in Bldg.</th>
<th># 5 Training</th>
<th># 8 Authority</th>
<th>NAASP Climate Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean climate score = 176.8

8 % perceive authority

83 % had discipline training
Table 12

Profile of School 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Exp.</th>
<th>Years in Bldg.</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Climate Score</th>
<th>NAASP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>168</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean climate score = 189

17% perceive authority

41% had discipline training
Table 13

Profile of School 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th># 4 Gender</th>
<th># 2 Years of Exp.</th>
<th># 3 Years in Building</th>
<th># 5 Training</th>
<th># 8 Authority</th>
<th>NAASP Climate Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Starting</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean climate score = 194

45% perceive authority

82% had discipline training.
A one way analysis of variance was performed to test whether school climate is the same in all three schools. (See Table 14) This hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. Assumptions made for the one-way ANOVA were (1) that there were independent random samples (2) that there was normality of populations and (3) that there was homogeneity of variance. The decision rule was established to reject the null hypothesis if $F$ was greater than 3.2906. $F$ was calculated at 1.39 and thus there was failure to reject the null hypothesis and it was accepted that the school climate was the same in all three schools.

Table 14

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Climate of Three Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Schools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1900.61</td>
<td>950.31</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Schools</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22505.6</td>
<td>681.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24406.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though no difference between the schools was found with respect to school climate at the .05 significance level, it is interesting to note that school 3, which did have the highest combined total of perceived authority and discipline training, did have the highest school climate mean of 194. Although this is not significant, it was in the direction the researcher expected. That is, if teachers perceive they have authority for discipline and have had discipline training, the researcher would expect a school with
such teachers to have a more positive climate than a school that did not have such teacher perceptions.

Attention must be given to the mean climate score of school 3 and the relation to the number of years of experience of the teachers on staff who completed the survey. As can be noted school 3 had its greater number of teachers with 11-15 years of teaching experience. There were no first year teachers and a low number of teachers in the 1-5 year category. Furthermore, in comparing figures 5 and 6; the teachers in school 3 also had staff whose years of teaching experience was for the most part in the building under study.
Summary

The data can be summarized in respect to the research questions that have been posed.

Question 1: Does teacher perception of their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affect the climate of a school? When the sample was pooled and authority was examined as an isolated variable, there was no significant impact of teacher perception of discipline authority on school climate. When the three samples were separated, and perception of discipline authority was combined with amount of preservice training, then school 3, which had the highest percentage for both variables, yielded the highest climate score. Although not statistically significant at the .05 level, the scores indicate a trend towards a higher perception of climate when these two variables are present together at high levels.

Question 2: Does the amount of preservice training teachers have regarding student management and discipline affect their perceptions of the climate of the school? When the results of the teachers of the schools were pooled together to form one sample, and amount of preservice training was examined as an isolated variable, no significant impact on school climate was yielded. When the three samples were separated, and amount of preservice training in discipline was combined with teacher perception of authority for discipline, then school 3, which had the highest percentage of both variables, yielded the highest climate score. Although not statistically significant at the .05 level, the scores indicate a trend towards a higher perception of climate when these two variables are present together at higher levels.
Question 3: Does gender have an affect on teacher perception of school climate?
Gender was examined for the pooled sample through 2 two way analysis of variance. Gender did not appear to have an interacting effect on teacher perception of school climate.

Question 4: Is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building? Though not tested statistically it must be noted that in school 3, which had the highest mean climate score, there were no first year teachers. The majority of teachers in school 3 had 11-15 years of teaching experience and those years were in the present facility.

Of the variables being examined for influence on perceptions of school climate, none appear to have an affect when considered in isolation. This affirms the research that states that climate is the result of a multitude of variables present and interacting at the same time. So it would seem for this study, which shows a tendency for higher climate perception when teacher perception of authority is present with preservice training and the teacher is experienced in teaching and teaching in the same building for a period of time.

While a trend of higher climate might appear to be noted in school 3, a potential confound exists, and this trend cannot obviously be explained by either exposure to more behavior management courses or more years in the building. Other variables exist which may be impacting on the higher school climate score noted. This trend may be established upon further future investigation and study.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether teacher perception of their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school-wide discipline affects their perception of school climate in three special education schools in New Jersey. Subsidiary questions asked (1) whether the amount of teacher preparation for student discipline affects their perception of school climate (2) whether teacher gender affects their perception of school climate and (3) is teacher perception of school climate influenced by the number of years of teaching experience or years in a particular building?

Effective schools research grew out of the recommendations of the government sponsored report, "A Nation at Risk" (U. S. Dept. of Educ., 1983). This report outlined the reasons for the decline of the American educational system. Reformers believed that if effective schools could be identified and analyzed, then measures could be taken to apply effective practices in order to improve schools. The issue of school climate re-emerged in the search for effective schools. Studies pointed to a relationship between a climate perceived as positive by teachers and increased student achievement.
The elements contributing to a positive school climate have been enumerated and forms the focus of much study. The climate of a school is the perception of the people in the schools. Teachers are of primary concern in determining the climate of the school. How the teachers perceive the climate will impact on their sense of efficacy and ultimately affect student achievement.

Researchers agree that the building administrator plays a vital role in creating the climate of a school. After the importance of outstanding leadership, a safe and orderly environment is recognized as another factor in effective schools with a positive climate.

Another factor that grew out of effective school studies was the move to site-based management. Involving teachers in school decision making improves teacher perception of school climate, and thus makes a school more effective. A link therefore appeared to emerge between teacher responsibility for decision making and a safe, orderly school environment. If teachers felt they had the authority to design and implement school-wide discipline, would they then perceive the environment as orderly and thus the climate generally as positive?

Studies of effective schools and climate have usually been conducted in regular public schools with a general student population. This study, however, was conducted in three special education schools with a student population identified as emotionally and behaviorally disordered. Because of the disruptive nature of these students, it would seem that a safe and orderly environment would play an exceptionally important role in teacher perception of school climate. Furthermore, it would seem that teachers dealing with these challenging students would benefit from an educational curriculum that would incorporate strategies and methodology for managing this student population.
Design of the Study

Contacts were established with the superintendents of three educational services commissions in three counties in New Jersey. They granted approval to the researcher to approach the principals of three special education schools to administer two instruments to the teaching staff. The three schools were in three similar counties and student population in the three schools consisted of students who had been evaluated by child study teams and classified according to the special education codes of New Jersey. These classifications include a range of disabilities corresponding to the former New Jersey classifications of emotionally disturbed, neurologically impaired, perceptually impaired, and multiply handicapped. The principals provided the researcher with demographic information regarding the student and faculty population in the schools.

Of the total combined number of teachers in the three schools, 36 teachers, making up 72% of the combined teaching staff, participated in this study. Because the researcher was not present during the administration of the study instruments, it is not known why some staff did not participate in the study. All teachers were certified by the state of New Jersey, and held certification as teacher of the handicapped and/or teacher of specific content such as physical education or art. Teachers varied in the amount of experience they had teaching and the number of years they taught in the respective buildings.

Students in the three buildings have all been classified by child study teams of their sending districts. These classifications were previously known as emotionally disturbed, neurologically impaired, perceptually impaired, and multiply handicapped.
The researcher met with teachers to explain the procedure for testing and the voluntary nature of the process. Respondents were asked to complete two instruments. The NASSP School Climate Survey (Halderson, Kelley & Keefe, 1987) was used to measure school climate. A research-authored questionnaire was used to gather demographic information and ascertain teacher perceptions. While the researcher was present initially to distribute the surveys and provide explanation to teachers, the actual testing was administered at the three different schools by the building principals while the researcher was not present. Test protocols were collected and forwarded to the researcher.

Analysis of Data

Data were examined in two ways: (1) combining the staff of the three schools to form one sample, and (2) by comparing individual results of the three schools.

Two 2-way analysis of variance procedures were used to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. Each hypothesis tested concerned the effect of a different variable on school climate. Those variables were teacher perception of authority for designing and implementing school-wide discipline, amount of teacher preparation or training in student discipline, and teacher gender.

Demographic information pertaining to the student population and the teacher/respondents was obtained by the building principals. The principals completed a brief form which elicited the information regarding the student population. This included the number of students, family income levels, classifications, and number of students on probation. The form also elicited information regarding the teacher population and included the number of teachers, gender of teachers, types of certification, number of
years of teaching experience, and number of years teaching in the building. Teacher information was also elicited from the teachers as part of the research-authored teacher survey (Appendix E).

Review of the Findings

Hypotheses one, two and three did not reach the .05 significance level and resulted in the failure to reject the stated null hypotheses.

The first hypothesis stated that teacher perception of their authority and responsibility to design and implement school-wide discipline has an effect on school climate. A myriad of research has been conducted which supports the existence of a school climate and the components which contribute to a positive climate. Researchers concur that the building principal plays a vital role in setting the tone of a school climate. The role of the principal, however, was not the focus of this study. Rather, another component of school climate, that is the degree to which the building is safe and the student body is well disciplined, was addressed. In fact, a review of effective schools research (Baluch & Malone, 1994) indicates that climate frequently deals with the area of discipline, order and safety. In addition, research conducted for Goal Six of the U. S. Department of Education (1994) finds that schools with disciplined environments are distinguished by teacher participation in decision making.

It was based upon these findings that the researcher developed the hypothesis that if teachers perceived that they had the authority and responsibility to design and implement school-wide discipline, that they would in turn perceive a positive school climate.
Teacher perception of authority for school discipline was measured by a researcher-authored instrument (Appendix E). School climate was measured by the NASSP School Climate Survey. A two way analysis of variance yielded an F score of .43, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis. In addition, there was no interaction effect among the variables.

The second hypothesis stated that the amount of teacher preparation for student discipline has an effect on their perception of school climate. In the review of the literature, it was noted that student teachers voice serious concern regarding the degree of preparation they experience in dealing with student management and discipline issues (Greenlee & Ogletree, 1993). Although students have learned about principles of student behavior and management, they have seldom been instructed in how to apply such principles to improve discipline and classroom management (McDaniel, 1987).

This study examined the issue of preparation by assessing if those teachers who reported education in undergraduate school on dealing with student discipline issues would better be able to manage discipline problems, which would ultimately contribute to their perception of a more positive climate in the school.

The amount of teacher preparation was measured by a researcher-authored instrument. School climate was measured by the NASSP School Climate Survey. A two way analysis of variance yielded an F score of .91, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis. In addition, there was no interaction effect among the variables.

The third hypothesis stated that teacher gender has an effect on school climate. Two two-way analysis of variance tests examining teacher perception of authority and teacher perception of preparation were performed using gender as a third variable.
Gender had no effect on school climate. However, there is some interesting data indicating that the effect of gender may be present. An approximate 17 point difference between males and females in perception of responsibility indicates the need for further testing.

**Conclusions**

**Interpretation of Findings**

It was hypothesized that there would be an affect on school climate by teacher perception of authority, and the amount of teacher of preservice in student discipline. It was further hypothesized that there would be a gender interaction effect. These hypotheses were not confirmed. Three possible explanations for the lack of statistical significance for these hypothesized relationships will be presented. The first pertains to theoretical issues, the second to instrumentation, and the third to the sample of subjects.

**Theoretical Issues**

Research identifies positive school climate as a critical factor in student achievement. The identification of areas of school climate needing improvement has resulted in programs to enhance those areas needing improvement. The components that make up school climate have been listed and discussed at length in the literature. That there exists a construct of school climate is not in dispute. Where questions arise, however, is in the make-up of this important construct. It would seem that the very nature of this construct embodies not only multiple components, but multiple levels of these components.

Some of the components which researchers concur (Hoy et al. 1990, Ellis, 1988, Lindelow et al, 1989, Sweeney, 1992) lead to a positive school climate are school
leadership, shared value and mission, a safe and orderly environment, and faculty participation in decision making to create that environment. Principals cannot control student discipline by themselves (MacNauton & Johns, 1991). Furthermore, Ingersoll’s (1993) study pointed to faculty control over decisions concerned with discipline among the strongest predictor of reduced student conflict. Schools that establish a total approach to discipline have principals who hold teachers responsible for handling discipline problems (Wayson, 1985).

It seemed logical, that if these components were crucial to school climate, then teacher perception of their contribution to these elements would affect their perception of school climate. While research shows these factors to exist in a general educational setting, it would seem even more important in a special education setting where students with behavioral disorders affect both the daily routine and social interactions. Because the student population of interest evidenced these types of behavioral disorders, school climate in those buildings would potentially focus on a safe, orderly and disciplined environment.

Research shows that teacher training in creating and implementing school-wide discipline for students is limited. Schools of education usually incorporate discipline strategies within other coursework (Wesley & Vocke, 1992). Few programs offer separate student management courses. Student teachers are often preoccupied with concern that preservice programs do not prepare them adequately for addressing behavioral problems of students (Pilarski, 1994). It seemed plausible, then, that lack of training in creating a disciplined environment would impact on teacher perception of school climate.
A study by Pang (1992) investigated the relationship between school climate and discipline practices. This study indicated that gender bias does exist in teacher perceptions. In Pang’s study, female teachers perceived a climate to be more positive than their male counterparts. It also indicated that variables such as teacher age, rank and teaching experience impacted the perceptions of teachers towards the school climate. Thus it seemed appropriate to investigate the influence of gender on the perception of school climate.

It would seem that the theoretical basis of the hypotheses was sound.

**Instrumentation**

A second possible explanation for failure to find the hypothesized relationships must include characteristics and administration of the instruments used. The NASSP School Climate Survey (1987) was developed to assess school climate using standardized questions and test conditions in an objective format. There is a large body of documentation regarding its validity and reliability. The test was designed to measure ten components of school climate. These components are:

1. Teacher–Student Relationships
2. Security and Maintenance
3. Administration
4. Student Academic Orientation
5. Student Behavioral Values
6. Guidance
7. Student-Peer Relationships
8. Parent & Community-School Relationships
9. Instructional Management

10. Student Activities

While the test measures multiple aspects that result in a total score for school climate, one wonders if examination of subtests would have yielded more pertinent information. Specifically, since school climate is a multi-dimensional construct, would teacher training impact one particular area of school climate rather than school climate in its totality? Perhaps an analysis of the correlation between teacher training and the specific subtests relating to student discipline would affirm a relationship. The structure of this test, however, did not allow for this comparison. Furthermore, information for this instrument does not show what factors are considered most important in participants' mind for a positive climate. There is no rank order of the factors considered most important in terms of determining climate.

The second instrument utilized was the researcher-authored teacher questionnaire. This was designed to furnish demographic information about the sample as well as teacher training and teacher perception regarding their authority and responsibility for designing and implementing a school-wide discipline program. A pilot study was conducted to ensure clarity of questions. Reliability of teacher certification was established through confirmation by information furnished by the building principals.

Teacher training in discipline, one of the variables, was measured by self report and no objective or independent measure was taken. While there is no reason to assume that teachers would misrepresent their training, the possibility cannot be overlooked. Despite the fact that respondents were assured anonymity, any number of factors can influence self reporting. These may include embarrassment, lack of emotional
investment in the process, faulty memory, misunderstanding of teacher training criteria (Freeman, 1962). Sometimes presented information is not easily digested due to lack of experience or still developing critical skills; so a recent graduate might not easily process all that was presented. Also, since teachers may have been out of college for many years, their memory of undergraduate course content may be faulty.

Further, teacher perception of their responsibility for building discipline was also measured by this instrument. Teachers responded to question 8 on a Likert scale with strongly agree to strongly disagree as to their authority and responsibility to design and implement school-wide discipline programs. Again, while it appears unlikely, and despite the assurances of anonymity, numerous factors can influence self reporting. For example, teachers who favor the administrator may perceive things differently than teachers who do not favor the administrator. Misinterpretation of the meaning of the question is possible.

Administration of the instruments also bears examination. Tests were administered in three different buildings under the auspices of the building principals. The researcher advised the principals of test taking procedures and included a copy of instructions for respondents. The researcher was not present for the actual administration of the tests. It is not known at what time during their busy school day the teachers received their test protocols and instructions, nor what explanations or encouragement teachers received from their principals. There is no assurance that respondents participated with their best and most honest efforts.

In summary, the following appear to be explanations for the failure to find the hypothesized relationships using the two measures of instrumentation. First, the
instrument used to measure school climate, The School Climate Survey, reflected a global score. It would appear that relationships could exist between components of variables rather than variables in their totality. Therefore, in testing total variables the appearance of relationships among components may have been diluted.

Secondly, the researcher-authored survey, by necessity, was a self report measure. This type of instrument carries the risk of misrepresentation by respondents (Freeman, 1962). Finally, administration of the instruments was not controlled for consistent administration.

Sample of Subjects

A third explanation for failure to affirm the hypothesized relationships may be gleaned from examination of the sample. In this light sample respondents and sample size will be examined.

The sample consisted of 36 teachers from three special education schools in three counties in New Jersey. All were New Jersey certified teachers, 23 were certified as “teacher of the handicapped” while the remainder were certified in specific areas, such as physical education and art. Sixteen of the teachers were certified a “teacher of the handicapped” as well as a subject area. There were 15 male and 21 female respondents. Number of years of professional experience ranged from 1 to 16.

Schools were chosen on the basis of similarity of student population and school governance. For this reason only three schools were selected representing three different counties. Inclusion of other schools from other counties would have added unwarranted variables confounding the study. It would seem, however, that a larger sample of teachers would have contributed to a more valid examination of the variables. For
example, all respondents participated on a voluntary basis. Subjects were notified in writing by the researcher that there would be no penalty for nonparticipation. The researcher also requested that each building administrator assure teachers that there would be no penalty for nonparticipation. However, because the researcher was not on site during the administration of the surveys, there is no guarantee that such assurances were given by the administrator of each school. The possibility exists that teachers felt pressure to participate leading to a negative test taking attitude. A larger sample would control for this effect.

Limitations of the Study

Factors which might prove limiting to the findings of the present study will be presented here. Possible limitations include sample size, conditions of testing, and one of the assessment instruments.

Although the sample involved the total teaching staff of three different schools, because the schools were small, the teaching staff in each school was also small. Larger schools with a larger faculty from which to draw, or a greater number of schools would obviate this problem.

Because tests were administered without the direct supervision of the researcher, confounding variables could not be controlled. The researcher took all the information regarding the study to the schools and presented the information to the teachers. Although the researcher, in all cases, offered to wait for the instruments to be administered, the principals preferred to have the instruments administered by school personnel. There is thus no reliable information regarding respondent's test taking attitudes and its influence on scores, nor why some chose not to participate.
The NASSP Climate Survey yields a global score based on ten subtests that represent different aspects of school climate. This test was selected because of the large body of validity and reliability testing behind it. However, it is possible that there are components of school climate that this test measures that would dilute the relationship between teacher training and school climate, or the relationship teacher perception of their responsibility for school-wide discipline and school climate.

Finally, it is important to remember that while this study focused on the effect of teacher responsibility for discipline and teacher preservice training as variables in school climate, they are not the only variables affecting school climate. Other factors may influence teacher perception of school climate.

Recommendations for Future Research

The importance of school climate and factors that contribute to it have been well delineated in educational literature. The importance of maintaining order and discipline as one of the factors of a positive school climate has also been established. The role of the teacher in maintaining the discipline that contributes to the school climate continues to be of utmost importance.

The first suggestion for future research is to expand the sample. This could be accomplished by using ten schools, one for each educational service commission in New Jersey. This would have the benefit of providing a larger sample, more representative of teachers in New Jersey who deal with a student population of students with emotional/behavioral disorders.

In the same school, teachers had varying perceptions of the same characteristic. For example, when asked if the teacher perceived that he or she had authority and
responsibility to design and implement school-wide behavior programs, some teachers responded yes and some responded no in the same school. This leads the researcher to wonder if teachers are given different responsibilities within a school, and if teachers understood the question properly. It would seem necessary to obtain the perception of the building administrator as a way to check what teacher expectations are regarding discipline responsibility. In a school with a positive climate, the perceptions of the teachers and administrator should match. Also, perhaps teachers who report they do have authority and responsibility could write one example to illustrate.

Nusser and Haller (1995) conclude from their research that climate measurements often neglect to measure correlation among targeted respondents in climate surveys. As climate refers to agreement of shared values and shared perceptions of participants, climate measures need to consider perceptions of students, teachers, administrators and parents. In the future the Climate Survey should be given to all of these groups to see if a unitary perception of school climate exists.

Many climate instruments, including the School Climate Survey used in this research, have separate assessments for separate school stakeholders. The NASSP School Climate Survey, for example, has protocol for teachers, administrators and students. In an open system parents, too, would be considered stakeholders and would be assessed for their perceptions of school climate. In this research only the teacher survey was administered. Perhaps more pertinent information could be gleaned by administering all three survey instruments to students, teachers and administrators and comparing the results. If the students, administrators and teachers have different perceptions regarding the climate of the school, then those areas need to be examined.
The second suggestion for future research is to establish reliability of the research-authored instrument. In this way the research-authored survey would meet acceptable psychometric standards adding reliability across administrations. Future research should also determine whether the subtests of the Climate Survey could be scored independently and used to measure relationships with teacher perceptions without calculating a total climate score so that the subscales that incorporate building discipline issues would not be diluted.

The final suggestion for future research is to create a standardized testing situation to control for confounding variables. For example, the forms could be mailed directly to teacher with a cover letter expressing approval from the principal. Following this, a standardized debriefing to determine the presence of test taking interference could be introduced. Alternatively, respondents could be personally interviewed by the researcher following a standardized format that would add a qualitative component to the study. This would allow the researcher to follow up on ambiguous answers and obtain necessary information.

Thus, while the analysis of data did not provide significant results, interesting trends were noted and questions were raised. Further research on this worthwhile topic will add an important dimension to the field of education.
References


http://detnews.com/menu/stories/17334.htm


New Jersey Administrative Code (1997). Title 6, Education, Chapter 28, Special Education


Reaching the goals: goal 6 – safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools.


Appendix A:

Letter to Superintendents
Dear Superintendent,

Currently I am completing the requirements for a doctorate degree in educational administration at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. For my dissertation research I am examining teacher perceptions of their personal authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school wide discipline and its effect on school climate. I am seeking your approval to administer two surveys to teachers in a commission school.

The climate survey being used is the NASSP School Climate Survey and elicits responses regarding several characteristics found in schools. The second survey was designed by me to gain descriptive information of respondents, as well as their perceptions as described above. The subjects will be informed that neither they nor their school will be identified in the reporting phases of this project. Their responses will be destroyed when they are no longer required. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. These surveys should take less than fifteen minutes to complete.

With your permission, I would like to contact the principal of one of the commission schools to arrange to meet with teachers and administer these surveys. I hope that you will approve my request to conduct research in your district, and look forward to receiving your decision. Should you have further questions, please call me at 732-905-1228.

Yours truly,

Dale Weinbach
Appendix B:

Letter to Principals
Dear Principal,

As part of my doctoral studies in educational administration at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, I am currently involved in a research project. I am examining teacher perceptions of their personal authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school wide discipline and its effect on school climate. I am also exploring whether teachers report that they had adequate preparation for student discipline in their undergraduate coursework. Information will be gathered through the administration of two survey instruments. The School Climate Survey, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, will be used and elicits responses regarding several characteristics found in schools. The second survey was designed by me to gain descriptive information of respondents, as well as their perceptions as described above.

Your superintendent of schools has been informed of this project and has given approval for the research to be conducted in your building. With your permission, I would like to administer the two surveys to your teaching staff. Both surveys can be completed in less than fifteen minutes. Participation by staff would be voluntary, and they would not be named in any way in this research. The name of your school would not be used as part of the research data; however, I will be asking you to supply demographic information.

I hope that you will approve my request to conduct research in your school, and look forward to receiving your decision. Should you have further questions, please call me at 732-905-1228.

Yours truly,

Dale Weinbach
Appendix C.

Second Letter to Principals
19 Cherry Hill Lane  
Manalapan, NJ 07726  
October, 1998

Dear Principal,

Thank you for agreeing to let me use your school for part of my study. The nature of this study lends itself to withholding the name of your school as well as the names of your staff members in the actual paper. In the winter of 1998 I would need to administer a brief survey to your teaching staff. Please mail or fax the following information regarding your school. Thanks in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Dale Weinbach

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

Today's date:

Total number of students: Male: Female:

Classifications of students:

Age Range of Students:

Groupings: # self contained classes: #departmentalized:

Number of students on free lunch:

Number of students on probation:

Total number of teachers: Male: Female:

Types and numbers of teacher certifications:

Teacher years of experience: just started 1-5  6-10  11-15  16+
Appendix D:

Letter to Teachers
Dear Teacher,

I am currently completing requirements for a doctoral degree in educational administration and supervision at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. My research project is concerned with teacher perceptions of their personal authority and responsibility for designing and implementing school wide discipline and its affect on school climate. Additionally, information will be gathered regarding the amount of preservice training you have received in student discipline. The method used for gathering information is by inviting teachers to complete two survey instruments. One is the School Climate Survey, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, which elicits responses regarding several characteristics found in schools. The second survey was designed by me to gain descriptive information of respondents, as well as their perceptions as described above.

Completion of both the survey and the questionnaire should take less than fifteen minutes. Names of the schools and research participants will not be identified in any part of this study. Data collected is solely for the purpose of research and will be destroyed when no longer needed. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time without any consequence. Your completion and return of the questionnaire will serve to indicate your understanding of the project and your willingness to participate in the study. I welcome any comments or questions you may have, and can be reached at (732) 905-1228.

Yours truly,

Dale Weinbach
Appendix E:

Research-Authorized Teacher Survey
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Directions: Choose the response that is the best answer for you and indicate by marking a check next to the letter of your choice. Responses are confidential, and individual participants are completely anonymous. There are no right or wrong answers, however, all responses are valuable.

1. Which of the following certifications do you hold in education?
   a. _____ Teacher of the Handicapped
   b. _____ Standard Elementary
   c. _____ Subject area (specify, i.e. Physical Education, Spanish, English, etc.)

2. How many years of professional teaching experience do you have?
   a. _____ 0
   b. _____ 1 - 5
   c. _____ 6 - 10
   d. _____ 11 - 15
   e. _____ 16+

3. How many years have you been teaching in this facility?
   a. _____ just started
   b. _____ 1 - 5
   c. _____ 6 - 10
   d. _____ 11 - 15
   e. _____ 16+

4. Please note your gender.
   a. _____ Female
   b. _____ Male

5. Did your teacher education curriculum provide training in student management/discipline?
   a. _____ Yes
   b. _____ No

   If Yes, was the training:
   i. _____ a separate course
   ii. _____ part of another course
   iii. _____ 2 courses
   iv. _____ 3 or more courses
6. Rank the order from one (1, most important) to five (5, least important) of how you think a teacher learns best about discipline.

   a._____ Observing other teachers.   d._____ Pre-teaching course work
   b._____ Staff development.         e._____ Combination of above items.
   c._____ Practice in classroom

   _____ Please specify.

7. Is there a schoolwide discipline system in your school?

   a._____ Yes                                      b.____ No
   
   If Yes:
   A. Who designed this system:

       i.____ Teachers                             iii.____ Administration
       ii.____ Teachers & Administration          iv.____ other (please explain)

   B. Who implements this system:

       i.____ Teachers                             iii.____ Administration
       ii.____ Teachers & Administration          iv.____ other (please explain)

8. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 is "strongly disagree," circle the appropriate number for the following statement:

   "I have the authority and responsibility to design and implement school wide discipline in the school where I teach."

   1  2  3  4  5  
   (strongly agree) (strongly disagree)