Does School Discipline Style Make a Difference?

Ted Haselman

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Findlay’s College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

April 2017

Committee:

Rahman Dyer, Ph.D.
Chair, Dissertation Committee

Michael Scoles, Ed.D.
Committee Member

John Cindric, Ed.D.
Committee Member
ABSTRACT

While many studies exist on the impact of parenting discipline styles, few exist in the area of school administrator discipline styles. This study investigated if school administrator discipline styles impact middle school students’ standardized test scores and school climate from the middle school teachers’ perspective. Participants included 239 teachers from 21 middle schools. Grade 6-8 Language Arts and math state standardized test passage percentage results were analyzed and the Delaware School Climate Survey was conducted with teachers through an online format. Results indicate no significant difference between school administrator’s discipline style and students’ standardized test scores. A significant difference was found between school administrator’s discipline style and school climate. The authoritative discipline style positively impacts schools. School leaders should work to implement this school discipline style over authoritarian, permissive, and disengaged discipline styles.

Keywords: school discipline, authoritative discipline, school climate, academic achievement, standardized tests.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation research project to my family. To my parents, Dennis and Linda, who instilled a work ethic and an attitude that I can do whatever I set out to do. They taught me at an early age “once you learn it, it can never be taken away.” Additionally, I would like to thank my wife, Jennifer. You inspired and encouraged me to begin the program, and supported me throughout the entire process. Finally, to my children, Brendon, TJ, and Megan. You sacrificed time with dad while I worked on this project. I hope my completion of this goal inspires you to make the most of your educational opportunities, instills a diehard work ethic, and an attitude that you too can do whatever you set out to do. Thank you to you all.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to the following individuals for their support, guidance, and assistance throughout this process.

To my dissertation committee, Dr. Rahman Dyer, for serving as my committee chair, continuing to urge me to enter the University of Findlay’s doctoral candidate program, providing encouraging words and reassurance throughout the process, and helping me to see this daunting quest through. Dr. Michael Scoles, for providing support, guidance, and a great learning opportunity and to Dr. John Cindric, for offering assistance to this process and providing his knowledge of organizational leadership.

To the leaders of the doctoral program, Dr. Michael Scoles whose guidance helped our cohort begin this journey and to Dr. John Gilham, for leading us to the end.

To the 21 middle school principals who agreed to allow their teachers to participate in this research study and to the 239 middle school teachers who voluntarily participated in the online survey providing data for the research.

And finally, to my editor, Mrs. Andrea Johnson, for her assistance in revising the draft into a final product.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale &amp; Significance of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Bias</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW                                                       | 19   |
| School Discipline                                                                   | 20   |
| Authoritarian Discipline                                                             | 24   |
| Authoritative Discipline                                                             | 26   |
| Permissive Discipline                                                                | 30   |
| Disengaged Discipline                                                                | 31   |
| School Climate                                                                       | 32   |
| Safe and Supportive                                                                  | 37   |
| Summary                                                                             | 46   |

| CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY                                                            | 48   |
| Research Design                                                                     | 48   |
Recommendations ........................................................................................................ 90
Future Research Opportunities .............................................................................. 93
REFERENCES ............................................................................................................ 96
APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL .............................................................................. 105
APPENDIX B. INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY ......................... 106
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Descriptive Definitions of Discipline Styles</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participating School Buildings Perceived Discipline Style</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T-test results comparing the authoritative and non-authoritative school discipline styles’ impact on passage percentage of state standardized tests</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>T-test results comparing the authoritative and non-authoritative school discipline styles effect on teacher perception of school climate (School Climate Scale)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Subscale Mean Differences of the School Climate Scale: authoritative schools vs. non-authoritative schools</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>T-test results comparing the authoritative and non-authoritative school discipline styles effect on teacher perception of school climate (positive, punitive, and social emotional learning techniques scale)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Subscale Mean Differences of the Use of Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale: authoritative schools vs. non-authoritative schools</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Baumrind’s Parenting Style Matrix</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The K-12 educational system provided to our students is one of the most important services that society offers our youth. The education students receive can and will determine their success in many facets of their lives. The lack of a solid education can potentially be detrimental to students’ future lives as adults. Studies show solid support that educational quality affects employment and earnings of individuals later in life (Carroll & Scherer, 2008). Additionally, Carroll & Scherer (2008) stated strong evidence between an individual’s educational quality and their physical and mental health later in life. Due to these long-term outcomes on students, schools must offer a high quality educational system.

Our schools face many problems. Problems our schools face have a broad range and all have an extensive impact on the educational outcomes of our students. Most individuals would agree a quality and strong educational systems ability to educate our students is important. The topic of quality schools is neither a new idea nor a new discussion among educators. For our K-12 educational system to be successful, each problem it faces must be addressed to ensure our students are not subjected to potentially detrimental outcomes that come from low quality schools.

One of the major problems our schools face is student discipline. Behind drug abuse, lack of discipline has been cited as the second greatest problem our public schools must address (Bear, 1998). According to Burns (1985) “public school boards, administrators, and teachers are dissatisfied with the discipline within public schools” (p. 1). School discipline has been receiving sufficient program development and staff professional development for many years in the educational world; however, it remains a concern (Burns, 1985). In other words, educators
and school personnel realize the discipline problem exists but have been unsuccessful in eliminating or containing the problem.

**Background of the Problem**

Schools must be both safe and supportive for effective teaching and learning to take place (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). When the number of discipline issues are high in a school, it has a negative effect on the learning process for students within the building.

According to the U. S. Department of Education (2014), it is impossible to create the safe and positive school environments where great teaching flourishes and students are motivated to engage in rigorous curriculum without also creating fair, proportional, and effective discipline policies. These policies must be equitably applied in order to prevent and change inappropriate student behavior (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). The significance of the problem of the lack of school discipline is important to the educational outcomes for all students. Misbehavior of students impedes learning, distracts administrative time, and contributes to staff burnout (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Discipline, or the lack of discipline, can and will have an effect on the overall climate of the school building. The U. S. Department of Education (2014) reported “while difficult, this work [discipline] is essential to achieving the goal of supporting all students in safe and supportive learning environments that promise academic excellence and student success” (p. 48). According to Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) “Schools face a number of challenges related to disruptive and antisocial students” (p. 48).

Understanding this problem better will serve our school administrators and leaders, teachers, school staff, and ultimately impact our students in a positive manner.

Students misbehave at school for a variety of reasons. One of the most common reasons a student acts up at school is because of boredom (Buck, 1992). Other reasons students
misbehave at school include frustration, an attempt to gain attention from their peers or teachers, a perceived power struggle, and because they have simply given up trying to meet the expectations of the school (Buck, 1992). Many times outside factors, such as the events of a student’s personal life, are the driving forces as to why the student acts out. According to Greene (2010) these outside factors are not completely irrelevant; however, many times they are circumstances that the school can do nothing about. From time to time, peer pressure is a motive for students to misbehave in the school setting. Countless reasons may cause a student to misbehave. No matter the reason, bad behavior in schools can affect the education of students involved in and impacted by the misconduct.

There are different strategies of how student discipline is handled by school leaders. Each school leader has their own discipline styles influencing the student population. “There is currently a wide disparity in high school discipline practices, ranging from schools that demand behavioral conformity and compliance to those that emphasize student autonomy and independent decision making” (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 483). School discipline encompasses more than “passing out” punitive punishments and it must include developing the student’s self-discipline (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Some practices of discipline are to remedy a behavior and some practices are to prevent misbehavior (Burns, 1985). With multiple discipline styles existing in schools, all styles hope to modify bad student behavior.

School officials use discipline measures with the intention of changing student behaviors in a positive manner. If a student is disciplined and the behavior of the student does not change, the discipline was unsuccessful; if the behavior of the student does change in a positive manner, the discipline was a successful intervention with that student. According to Bear (1998) teaching children social decision-making and problem-solving skills is a combination that serves a dual
purpose of managing behavior in the short-term while developing self-discipline in the long-term. The point is that schools should be attempting to change student behaviors and teach students lifelong skills through behavior management techniques.

How discipline is handled in a school building fits into the larger scheme of the school climate. According to the University-Community Partnerships @ Michigan State University (2004), “school climate is evident in the feelings and attitudes about a school expressed by students, teachers, staff and parents—the way students and staff ‘feel’ about being at school each day” (p. 2). There are a number of factors that determine school climate among the school stakeholders. While not all researchers agree on all factors that create the school climate, most researchers agree on the factors of school safety, order and discipline as having a large role in the climate of a school building. Voight, Austin, and Hanson (2013) concluded “that a growing body of research suggests that school climate may be an important variable in explaining why some schools are more successful than others” (p. 1). Incidentally, student discipline being a major factor in school climate and school climate a major factor in an individual school building’s achievement and success, student discipline directly impacts academic outcome.

The discipline style utilized by school administration to address student discipline problems can vary, as multiple styles of school discipline exist. The four most common styles of discipline are the authoritarian style, authoritative style, permissive style, and disengaged style (Gunnoe, 2013). Each style consists of different demanding levels and response levels by the disciplinarian. The authoritarian style consists of high demanding but low response level; the authoritative style consists of high demanding and high response level; the permissive style consists of low demanding but high response level; and the disengaged style consists of low
demanding and low response level (Gunnoe, 2013). The varying level of demanding and responsiveness create the discipline style of the student disciplinarian.

Gregory and Cornell’s (2009) definition of authoritative school discipline “maintains that schools must discipline students with an appropriate blend of structure [monitoring and behavior control] and support [acceptance and respect for autonomy]” (p. 108). According to Brown-Richards (2011), research consistently reveals that young people exposed to consistency in parental guidance such as limit setting, monitoring, support, and high expectations, typically show higher academic achievement. Gregory et al. (2010) stated “At the classroom level, research has shown that adolescents benefit from teachers who use an approach similar to authoritative parental guidance” (p. 484). In other words, when students are held to a standard and a higher expectation, and students know and understand the standard and expectations, students will usually rise to the occasion and meet expectations.

In general, authoritative discipline is looked at as a positive “teaching” style whether it is from parents at home or from school personnel. In a comparison of parenting styles and classroom teaching styles, Bernstein (2013) states the ability for a direct comparison between discipline styles in the two settings is possible. Allen (2010) stated “that bullies and victims tend to come from families where parenting is either passive or authoritarian, and that children who come from homes where they have experienced authoritative parenting are less likely to be involved in either bullying or victimization” (para. 27). Walker (2009) stated “Good parenting involved balancing two dimensions: control, or enforcing demands for appropriate behavior, and nurturance, or supporting children’s individuality” (p. 123). Walker (2009) continues on to say that creating consistent demands and leveling up those demands according to the children’s developmental capability or maturity and being responsive and sensitive to the child’s needs is a
good balance of control and nurturance. Reiterating what the experts say about authoritative
discipline, structure and support, whether in the home or the school setting, creates a positive
environment for children and students.

With comparisons of the discipline style utilized in each type of setting, one could argue
the school leader’s role is similar to the parenting of a child. Discipline styles utilized by the
leader, or those “in charge,” of the different settings can be paralleled. With the parenting
discipline style influencing children at home or outside of the school building and teachers’
discipline style influencing students in the individual classroom, one could reason a school
leader’s discipline style can influence the students and teachers in the overall school setting.
This influence can be directly compared to parenting. Walker (2009) states discipline styles used
to define parenting styles can be applied in the school setting. In the school setting, school
leaders parent staff and students with discipline styles much like a parent influences a child in the
home by utilizing a discipline style with a combination of demanding level (structure) and
response level (support).

Rationale & Significance of the Study

The foundation for this study is to further the research on school discipline, primarily in
the way a lack of school discipline impacts schools and student success. The lack of school
discipline is a major problem and has been a problem for a very long time in the educational
system. The lack of school discipline can have a major impact on the climate of a school
building for all stakeholders involved. According to Pasternak (2013), research has shown
academic achievement declines due to student discipline problems. Solving the lack of school
discipline problem is essential for continuous improvement of the educational system.
While research on authoritative parenting seems to be readily available, research on authoritative discipline in schools seems to be limited. Gregory and Cornell (2009) state “Limited to a focus on qualities of good teaching, studies described thus far have not considered the influence of structure and support at the school level” (p. 108). Research on the topic of authoritative discipline in schools is lacking according to Gregory and Cornell (2009). “In fact, studies are lacking on the effects of schoolwide authoritative discipline on school safety, engagement, and achievement” (Gregory & Cornell, 2009, p 108). Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of the authoritative discipline style on school climate and overall educational outcomes of students within a middle school building.

With education being one of the most important services that society offers our children, it is important that we provide the best education possible. Carroll & Scherer (2008) state “there is very strong evidence that educational quality affects employment and earnings” (p. 13) of individuals. According to Mitra (2011) “Improving the educational outcomes of students could result in a national savings between $7.9 and $10.8 billion annually in governmental assistance programs such as public assistance, food stamps and housing assistance” (p. 12). Individuals with low quality education are more apt to have low socioeconomic status. Creating a positive environment where academic success of students takes place within schools, and establishing effective discipline practices is key (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). Given that school discipline has an effect on the education of our students, it is a topic that should be discussed and studied as schools impact students’ lives well into adulthood. In addition to benefiting students individually, there are also larger social implications and benefits. With school discipline being a leading problem within schools, and given the effect school discipline
can have on the learning process of students, finding a solution that will improve outcomes impacted by school discipline style is imperative to enhancing schools.

Findings of this study may benefit and impact school leaders and administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, other researchers and ultimately students. According to Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) “it is well known that the leader of an organization sets the tone and explicit or implicit norms of behavior” (p. 187). Principals have a direct impact on the climate and environment of school buildings they lead based on decisions they make (Clifford, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Fetters, 2012). School leaders and administrators will be able to learn from this study whether or not authoritative discipline does significantly impact student success and climate in a school building. The study’s findings can help school leaders make better decisions as to whether they should implement or not implement this type of discipline atmosphere in the school buildings they guide. With school discipline having an impact on the environment within a school, these decisions affect teachers and staff who work in the building. This study has potential to find a place within the overall dialogue of school discipline and potentially impact other researchers as they study the overarching problem of discipline in our schools with a main focus of providing knowledge and research on the authoritative discipline

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the authoritative discipline style on school climate and overall educational outcome of students within a middle school building. This study may uncover the benefits or disadvantages of the authoritative discipline style on middle school students as well as on the climate of middle school buildings. This study can provide additional information and input on the overarching problem of discipline in our schools with a main focus of providing knowledge and research on the authoritative discipline
style. This research can enhance the conversation in academic circles for the improvement of our educational system by improving an area of schools needing attention, the lack of school discipline.

Research is readily available regarding the topic of authoritative discipline when it pertains to parenting and some research has been completed about the topic within the classroom setting. Little research has been completed on authoritative discipline and the effects on a middle school building. Because of this lack of research, this study may potentially open doors to other research within the topic of school discipline. Future possible research could be conducted on comparing and contrasting different styles of discipline and the effects on entire school buildings. Another potential study to come about from this research could be a study on the correlation between different parenting styles when complemented by different discipline styles within the school the student/child attends. This research may lead to many possible studies within the topic of school discipline.

Theoretical Framework

The independent variable of this study, school discipline, follows the framework of Diane Baumrind’s Parenting Theory. Diane Baumrind’s Parenting Theory has classified four types of parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful (Baumrind, 1967, 1971). While Baumrind’s discipline styles refer to parenting, Walker (2009) argues this theoretical framework can be applied to the school setting. Each style consists of different demanding levels and response levels by the disciplinarian. The authoritative style consists of high demanding and high response level; the authoritarian style consists of high demanding but low response level; the permissive style consists of low demanding but high response level; and the neglecting style consists of low demanding and low response level (Gunnoe, 2013). The varying
level of demanding/control and responsiveness/warmth create the discipline style of the disciplinarian (see Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Response/Warmth Level</th>
<th>Low Response/Warmth Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Demanding/Control</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Demanding/Control</td>
<td>Permissive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Baumrind’s Parenting Style Matrix. Retrieved from http://danesedblog.blogspot.com/2008/10/what-is-your-parenting-style.html

Authoritative school discipline is defined as an approach which “combines both firm enforcement of school rules and a concerted effort to communicate warmth and concern for the well-being of each student as an individual” (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 484). Similarly, authoritative parenting is defined as an approach in which “parents displayed high levels of warmth and affection and placed reasonable demands on their children” (Brown-Richards, 2011, p. 4). Gregory et al. (2010) state research has proven classroom management approaches are similar to authoritative parenting in benefitting adolescents. Applying the same concept of high and low response/warmth level and high and low demandingness/control level to the school environment will guide the framework for exploring the impact of authoritative discipline on academic outcomes of middle school students and authoritative discipline on school climates.

An additional framework impacting this study follows Robert Merton’s Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. The idea of self-fulfilling prophecy is an individual’s belief, whether true or untrue, will eventually lead to it’s own fulfillment (Madon, Willard, Guyll, & Scherr, 2011). This thought can also be viewed as individuals or groups “living up to” or “down to” expectations.
Students who are placed in groups by ability, and know and understand they are placed into these groups based on their ability, will perform to the level of expectation of their ability group (Smith et al., 1998). In other words, when leaders of groups, school buildings’ administrators in this study, have high expectations or low expectations of the individuals they lead, the individuals or groups will reach the expectation, either high or low. Tenenbaum and Ruck state “Teacher expectations can translate into behaviors that affect students performance and contribute to a classroom climate in which equality can be significantly compromised” (2007, p. 270). Applying the same concept of either high or low expectations to the school environment at the school administrator level will guide the framework for exploring the impact of discipline on academic outcomes of middle school students and school climates. This framework can explore the idea that a specific discipline style may create and impact a school culture as well as impact student achievement through self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Research Questions**

Discipline, or the lack of discipline, has been identified as a leading problem within public schools (Bear, 1998). Even with the magnitude of time and funds directed towards correcting the discipline problem, the situation still exists within schools. Authoritative discipline in regards to parenting has been studied much more extensively than authoritative discipline in school settings. To gain a better understanding of the impact of the authoritative discipline style on school climate and overall educational outcome of students of a middle school building, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is school discipline associated with a difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores?
2. What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive and social emotional learning techniques scale).

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study and to aid in its discussion, key terms were defined.

*Middle Schools:* Middle schools are schools that house grades 5-8 or grades 6-8. According to Caskey and Anfara (2007) middle school students are between the ages of 10-15 years old. Generally, students in grades 5-8 would fall into this age range. In this study, middle schools housed in the same building with high school students, grades 9-12, are not included.

*Educational outcomes:* Educational outcomes, for the purpose of this study, are the results of the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test scores. Multiple methods of defining educational outcomes exist and are capable of being a valid measure. Valid methods include both standardized testing and non-standardized assessments. Sanders and Horn (1995) characterize standardized tests as:

> Standardized tests, whether the ubiquitous multiple choice test or other forms of standardized assessment, vary in their ability to fairly assess student knowledge, just as teacher assessments do. But current construction practices insure that standardized tests are subjected to rigorous validation criteria, reliability testing, and standardization procedures. The tests are open to review by experts and to criticism by anyone with credible grounds from which to argue. In the past, standardized tests have proved useful in comparing, generalizing, and indicating levels of attainment based on set standards. In current practice, they serve many additional functions including the assessment of higher-order reasoning skills and academic growth over time. (p. 2)
When attempting to compare academic outcomes of many students from multiple schools, the standardized testing method allows the researcher to ensure validation and equate results against one another using consistent data.

*School Climate:* School Climate refers to the quality and character of school life; is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life, and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices; includes expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe; and a feeling where individuals are engaged and respected (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

*Authoritative school discipline:* Authoritative school discipline is defined as an approach that “combines both firm enforcement of school rules and a concerted effort to communicate warmth and concern for the well-being of each student as an individual” (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 484).

*Baumrind’s Authoritarian Style:* This style attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the student in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. The disciplinarian values obedience as a virtue and favors punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will at points where the student’s actions or beliefs conflict with what they think is right conduct. The disciplinarian believes in keeping the student in his/her place and in restricting his/her autonomy. The disciplinarian regards the preservation of order and traditional structure as a highly valued end in itself. The disciplinarian does not encourage verbal give and take, believing that the student should accept their word for what is right (Baumrind, 1966).

*Baumrind’s Authoritative Style:* This style attempts to direct the student’s activities but in a rational, issue-oriented manner. The disciplinarian encourages verbal give and take, shares
with the student the reasoning behind a policy, and solicits student’s objections when they refuse to conform. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued, therefore, the disciplinarian exerts firm control at points of adult-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions. The disciplinarian enforces their own perspective as an adult, but recognizes the student’s individual interests and special ways. The disciplinarian affirms the student’s present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct. The disciplinarian uses reason, power, and shaping by regime and reinforcement to achieve their objectives, and does not base decisions on group consensus or the individual student’s desires (Baumrind, 1967).

**Baumrind’s Permissive Style:** This style attempts to behave in a non-punitive, acceptant and affirmative manner towards the student’s impulses, desires, and actions. The disciplinarian consults with the student about policy decisions and gives explanations for school rules. The disciplinarian makes few demands for school responsibility and orderly behavior. The disciplinarian presents himself/herself to the student as a resource for the student to use as they wish, not as an ideal for them to emulate, or as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering the student’s ongoing or future behavior. The disciplinarian allows the student to regulate their own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage the student to obey externally defined standards. The disciplinarian attempts to use reason and manipulation, but not overt power to accomplish the disciplinarian ends (Baumrind, 1966).

**Baumrind’s Disengaged Style:** This style attempts to be uninvolved, detached, dismissive or hands-off. The disciplinarian is low in support and control, generally not involved with the students, are disengaged, undemanding, low in responsiveness, and do not set limits with the students. The disciplinarian dismisses the student’s emotions and opinions. The
disciplinarian is emotionally unsupportive of the students and provides no limit setting (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

**Delimitations**

When determining the scope of this study, there are a number of delimitations. Participants in the study are from public middle schools located in Ohio. Parochial schools and schools outside the state of Ohio are not required to administer the same standardized tests as Ohio public schools. Due to these variations, conducting the research within Ohio public schools exclusively allowed the researcher the ability to keep the focus group comparable.

This study includes middle school buildings with grades 6-8 students. The study does not include a school where grade 6-8 students are housed with high school students. Excluding schools where high school students are housed with middle school students allows the focus group to be similar and comparable. Middle schools can house grades 5-8 or grades 6-8. Middle schools which house grade five students are included in this study; however, grade five students and teachers are not part of the research group. Comparing educational outcomes among schools with fifth grade students to schools without fifth grade students limits standardized test score comparison availability, thus the reason for excluding the fifth grade age group.

This study includes middle schools with a minimum of 200 students enrolled in grades 6-8. Setting the population minimum, survey results will be less influenced by one or a few participants contributing to the study results. Schools of this size will generally have a teaching staff of 25-30 teachers.

Any school building where an administrator change took place within the last 12 months was excluded from this study. A new administrator’s influence on school discipline may change the climate of the school building. This new administrator may influence the current climate
however the state standardized test scores typically have a year of lag from being released by the Ohio Department of Education. This change may skew data and hinder the validity of the study.

To ensure a large number of participants, it is important to cast a wide net. To conduct a valid study and to be fair to all Ohio public middle schools, participation in this study was offered to all middle schools in the state of Ohio that fit the criteria defined. This solicitation of many schools helped ensure enough participants for valid data and a valid study.

The study will include the comparisons of the State of Ohio’s Department of Education’s standardized English Language Arts and math tests. With ongoing changes to the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized testing, the study would run the risk of incomplete testing data if other subjects were included. For many years, English Language Arts and math standardized tests have been the cornerstone of the Ohio Department of Education’s testing measures. Science and social studies testing have been included in state testing during some years, but not consistently.

**Limitations**

Several limitations in this study exist. This study includes surveys with participants self-reporting. With the self-reporting design, participating individuals may fear who will see the results, influencing how they answer the survey questions. The participant’s lack of knowledge as to why they are partaking in the survey may influence the individual’s responses. Lack of comprehension and reading skills could limit some participants ability to complete the survey. A particular mood, disposition, or frame of mind of a participant during the survey may influence the responses provided by an individual participant. According to Salyers and McKee (n.d.) sensitivity and emotional mood swings can influence individuals. If an individual is in a positive mood, they may provide more positive responses and vice versa if in a negative frame of mind.
A school beginning participation in the study but subsequently withdrawing from the study is a limitation. Due to optional involvement in the study by middle schools and school staff, a participating school and/or employee may choose to no longer participate in the study at any time for any number of reasons. This voluntary removal decreases the overall study population size.

The lack of participation due to a poor response rate could be a limitation to the study. Uncertainty as to the number of participating schools and the mixture of discipline types prior to conducting the study is an unknown when beginning the survey process. The final number of participating middle schools was 21. Ideally, the study would have consisted of many more middle school buildings providing a larger sample size. Population base of schools may consist of a few authoritative discipline style middle schools with a large number of non-authoritative discipline style middle schools or vice versa and/or anywhere in between. The final tally for each discipline group consisted of 17 authoritative discipline style middle school buildings and four (4) non-authoritative discipline style middle school buildings. This 17-4 discipline style ratio imbalance is a limitation of this study.

**Researcher Bias**

Researchers Pannucci and Wilkins (2011) stated “bias can occur at any phase of research, including study design or data collection, as well as in the process of data analysis and publication” (para. 3). In other words, bias of the researcher can filter into the study during any phase of a research study. Having numerous years of experience as a middle school principal, I have an opinion on the topic of my study. More importantly than my opinion is a craving to find out the truth the impact of the authoritative discipline style has on school climate and overall educational outcome of students in a middle school building. This desire to determine the impact
to better serve the stakeholders involved will keep me in a neutral mind frame as I work to find the study’s results. Setting up the research, constantly looking at all procedures, and analyzing the methods prior to implementation will decrease the opportunity to allow researcher bias to filter into the study. When the study unfolds, the results will tell the story; the results will either strengthen my opinion or they will change my belief altogether. The desire to help solve the discipline problem in public schools will force me to keep Pannucci and Wilkins’ claim that bias can occur at any stage of the research process in the forefront of the study procedures.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A high quality education is important and the quality of a student’s education can impact a student for a lifetime. As Mitra (2011) states “Education is primarily a way to train children in skills they will need as adults to find good jobs and live well” (p. 4). One factor in maintaining a quality educational environment is the school student discipline. A school with a lack of discipline has been reported as having lower academic outcomes. According to Pasternak (2013) “Many of the research findings in the social sciences, pedagogy and education argue for the strong relationship between discipline and academic achievement, with a lack of discipline considered as a factor in declining achievement” (p. 2). When individuals have a high quality education, they tend to have a much higher likelihood of securing employment and a much higher wage when employed than individuals who have a lower quality education (Carroll & Scherer, 2008).

For this research project, the researcher attempted to complete a comprehensive search of literature on the related project topics. Literature and past studies were sought through multiple sources. These sources included: The University of Findlay’s Shafer Library One Search online resource, internet searches for scholarly articles, and the local public library.

Literature was readily available on the topic of school discipline as a general theme. Due to the importance and nature of school discipline as a problem in schools, much research has been completed on the general topic. Literature on authoritative discipline was readily available when connected to parenting. Literature on authoritative discipline was limited when it related to an authoritative school discipline style; however, some literature was available regarding authoritative discipline at the classroom level. Literature on school climate was readily
available. Literature and research on the connection between authoritative discipline and school climate was limited.

The remainder of the literature review is organized to include relevant topics to this study. The topics include: 1) school discipline, 2) authoritarian discipline, 3) authoritative discipline, 4) permissive discipline, 5) disengaged discipline, 6) school climate, and 7) safe and supportive school studies. A summary will be provided of this previously published and relevant research literature at the conclusion of this chapter.

**Review of Research Literature**

**School Discipline**

Numerous studies identified and addressed school discipline. The first study is quantitative, focusing on the correlation between student discipline, student learning skills, and student academic achievement (Pasternak, 2013). Participants were fifth grade students ($n=143$) from three classrooms in Israel and one classroom in the United States. All four classrooms were similar in class size. The students were from middle class socioeconomic backgrounds and the gender breakdown included 68 boys and 75 girls. Two five-point Likert scale survey questionnaires were completed by the four classroom teachers. One survey consisted of closed items relating to four variables of discipline skills. These four discipline skills consisted of perseverance, meeting time schedules, goal-setting and planning for goal achievement, and completion of unpleasant tasks. The second survey consisted of closed item questions measuring conduct, academic achievement and intervening variables. Participants confidentiality was maintained and consent was obtained. The data was analyzed using the Pearson correlation, $t$-tests, ANOVA, and SEM statistics. The findings of this study indicated a positive and significant correlation among all four discipline skills and the two classroom discipline variables,
conduct and teacher. The study found a positive and significant correlation between all the discipline variables and all the components of academic achievement. In addition, no differences between girls and boys in any academic skills or conduct variables were noted and no differences were found among the four classes with respect to the four discipline skills and the two conduct variables. Overall, a correlation between discipline skills and academic achievement was found. Limitations identified in this study were small sample size, a mono method data collection utilized, and validity of teacher reports.

An additional study on the topic of school discipline included a mixed methods study involving a quasi-experimental study conducted in a mid-western United States elementary school. The rationale of the study was to demonstrate how whole-school positive behavior support has an impact on promoting positive student behavior, decreasing discipline problems, and improving academic performance (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). The participants were kindergarten through 5th grade students (n=550-666) from one elementary school over the course of three consecutive years. The study design included a pre-intervention phase, an intervention phase, a follow-up phase, and a teacher opinionated survey questionnaire. The data analyzed consisted of student office referrals, school suspension data, and Metropolitan Achievement Test-7th edition (MAT-7) standardized test scores. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained. The study results indicated a decrease in student office referrals during each phase, a decrease in student suspensions during each phase, and an increase in student MAT-7 standardized tests scores from the pre-intervention phase to the intervention phase, increasing 18 and 25 percentage points respectively. The survey data collected from teachers was a closed-ended Dichotomous questionnaire. The questionnaire gauged opinions and satisfaction with policies, performance responsibilities, elements of the physical
environment, and expectations from the teachers (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005). The teacher data results provided evidence for overall increase in positive outlook from implementing the Whole-School Positive Behavior Support (WSPBS) program. Limitations in this study included numerous restrictions such as reliability of recording the office referrals and school suspensions, implementation integrity of teachers and school administrators, financial costs of developing and sustaining the WSPBS, changing student population, seasonal variability, teacher turnover, and possible threats to the internal validity of the results.

A study assessed the effects of a School Wide Positive Behavior System (SWPBS) on school climate and student outcomes over a four-year period with middle school students utilizing a longitudinal experimental design. The design of the study was a quasi-experimental (non-equivalent two-group, pretest-posttest). The researchers hypothesized the school climate and student outcomes would improve over the four-year period in the treatment school, where the SWPBS was implemented, when compared to the non-treatment school (Caldarella et al., 2011). Both schools were members of the same school district in the western part of the United States. The participants consisted of teachers ($n=424$) and students ($n=10,766$) from the sixth and seventh grades of the middle school buildings. Due to the length of the study period, a high percentage of the teachers participated multiple times but approximately half of the student participants turned over each year. The treatment school was selected by convenience sampling and the control school was selected on geographic and demographic similarities to the treatment school. The instruments used in the study included two surveys administered as pretest and posttest to the teaching staff of both school buildings. These surveys were administered each year of the study. One survey completed by the teaching staff was the PBS-Supplemental Questionnaire (PBS-SC). The survey was completed by 81.4% of the teaching staff of the
The survey consisted of 18 items using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree). The PBS-SC measured the teacher’s perception of the students use of appropriate social skills, helpful and equitable environment, community involvement, and teacher praise and encouragement. The second survey administered to the teaching staff was the Indicator of School Quality (ISQ). The ISQ survey was completed by 74.3% of the teaching staff of the participating schools. The survey consisted of 30 items grouped into seven school climate categories. The categories consisted of parent support, teacher excellence, student commitment, school leadership, instructional quality, resource management, and school safety. The survey utilized a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree). The alpha reliability coefficients range from .78 to .97 for the ISQ survey categories. In addition to the survey data, student data was collected from the school administration. This data included student grade point average (GPA) and student behavior data such as tardiness, unexcused absences, and office discipline reports. GPA was calculated on a 4.0 scale. Tardiness and unexcused absences were collected for each of the seen class periods each day and reported as a mean number of each data set. Office discipline reports included conduct such as inappropriate language, physical aggression, dress code violation, property damage, theft, cheating, drug possession, and vandalism. Office discipline report data, due to differing student populations, was calculated and was represented by the average number of referrals per student for the school year. The analysis of data consisted of analysis of variance to examine differences across the four years of the interventions of the study; specifically examining changes in linear trend contrasts. Interactions effects were also analyzed to look at the significance of the changes relative to the control group. Cohen’s $d$ was used to calculate effect sizes from the first year of
the study to the final year of the study. The results from the PBS-Supplemental Questionnaire included the areas of student pro-social behavior, school communication/collaboration, and educational assistance. The linear trend contrasts showed statistically significant differences for the treatment school over the course of the four-year study. The control school, where no PBS interventions were implemented, did not show any changes. Statistically significant interaction effects showed all three areas improved at the treatment school, but stayed the same or declined at the control school. The results from the Indicators of School Quality survey indicated the treatment school showed statistically significant upward trends over the course of the study in all areas of the ISQ instrument. The positive gains in school climate had a medium to large effect size in the treatment school while the same areas did not indicate any statistical changes in the control school. Results from the student outcome area of this study, GPA, tardiness, unexcused absences, and office discipline reports, showed some improvement for the treatment school when compared to the control school. This improvement was considered small. Interestingly, all areas of the study showed the treatment school decreased at the end of the first year when compared to the controlled school, but later showed overall improvement at the end of the four-year period.

The limitations of this study include the small sample size of only two schools, the lack of randomness but use of convenience sampling when assigning schools, the lack of consistency measures regarding the treatment school implementation of the PBS interventions, and possible discrepancies regarding what constitutes the worthiness of an office discipline report for students as educators tolerance is varied.

**Authoritarian Discipline**

A study took place in Kenya to analyze the leadership style of university students, many in the field of education (Ombaka, 2015). The study includes quantitative data and descriptive
statistics, and utilized survey results of undergraduate students \((n=879)\) from six universities in Kenya. Three of the universities were private and three universities were public. The students degree fields included arts, sciences, and teaching, with over two-thirds pursuing education degrees. The researchers were able to identify low socio-economic students \((n=142)\), high socio-economic students \((n=63)\), and those of middle status \((n=674)\). The students were administered the “Unlabeled fascist attitudes” questionnaire (the word fascist is equivalent to the word authoritative). This survey consisted of 26 items and has a high reliability (alpha=.9158). The 26 items were broken into six different scales. These scales included interpersonal, inter-generational relations, leadership styles, will to power, gender relations, and the place of women in society. The questionnaire responses were in the form of a four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Analyses of the data were completed using simple frequency distributions to describe the general trends within the sample and subjected to hypotheses testing using the \(t\)-test. Frequency distributions indicated a high relation to authoritative tendencies in the areas of acceptance of discipline by elders (54.7%), admiration for strong overbearing leadership (67.3%), entertains little or no debate (81.5%), and sees nothing wrong with the application of extrajudicial sanctions against certain categories of deviants that could be regarded as “abnormal” (63.5%). The results indicated students felt “failure in life” may not be due to having a lack of will power (53.2%), women should be a part of the political processes in Kenya (82.2%), and women and men should have equal rights (77.4%). When comparing the traits of authoritarian personalities of first-year university students and the fourth-year university students, no statistical significance was found \((t=.646>P.05)\). The study found that there was no statistical difference of authoritarian traits between students pursuing education and the other disciplines \((t=.039>P.05)\). When analyzing the data to compare beliefs amongst
socio-economic status, no statistical significance was found ($t=.295>P.05$) between high, middle, or low socio-economic university students. When comparing males and females, the males had a slightly higher mean score (21.54) then females (21.15); however, both mean scores indicate predominantly authoritarian emphases. When analyzing the data across years of study at the university, year 1 through year 4, there was a slight decrease each year in mean (year 1=21.63, year 2=21.31, year 3=21.25, and year 4=20.89) but all scores indicate a strong belief in authoritarian leadership as acceptable. Limitations of the study include a small number of participating schools, the data was a self-report, and the survey results utilized were 16 years old at the time of study.

**Authoritative Discipline**

Many studies identified and addressed authoritative discipline. The first study is qualitative, examining authoritative discipline theory, consisting of structure and support, and its effect on school safety (Gregory et al., 2010). Participants included high school freshman ($n=7,318$) and high school freshman teachers ($n=2,922$) from 290 Virginia public high schools. The participating schools represent 92% of all public high schools in the state. Participants were randomly selected with approximately 25 students and 10 teachers from each participating school. The student gender make-up was 49% female and 51% male. Student participant self-reported ethnicity was 63% Caucasian, 22% African American, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, 5% other, and less than 1% American Indian. The teacher gender make-up was 64% female and 37% male. Teacher participant self-reported ethnicity was 83% Caucasian, 12% African American, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian American, 1% other, and less than 1% American Indian. Participating teachers reported the following as years of experience: 1-5 years 36%, 6-10 years 21%, 11-15 years 13%, and more than 15 years 30%. The study took place in 2007 and
surveys were conducted online. Both teachers and students completed the five-point Likert Bullying scale survey. Students completed the close-ended Dichotomous Victimization index. Students completed the five-point Likert scale Experience of School Rules survey. Students completed the five-point Likert scale Daily Structure scale survey. Students completed the five-point Likert scale Learning Environment scale survey. Students completed the five-point Likert scale Help Seeking scale survey. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained and consent was obtained. Confirmatory factor analyses were used to analyze survey scales. Hierarchical linear modeling was used in comparison of differences in schools. The findings of the study included higher levels of school structure and school supports were statistically associated with less bullying and higher levels of school structure and school supports were statistically associated with less student victimization. The findings indicated schools considered to be high in structure and high in supports differed significantly on bullying and victimization than schools low in both structure and support. The study indicated schools with lower proportion of minority students and higher proportion of students qualifying for free and reduced meals had more incidents of bullying and female students were more likely to report bullying than male students. Students who marked “other” for race were more likely than Caucasian students to report bullying and to report higher victimization. The findings indicated a higher ratio of minority students was significantly associated with teachers’ perceptions of more bullying and female teachers reported bullying among students more often than male teachers. The study also noted Caucasian teachers reported more bullying than African American and Asian teachers while teachers with less experience were more likely to report bullying. Limitations of the study included approximately 2% of teachers did not complete the Bullying scale, approximately 3%
of students did not complete the Bullying and Victimization scales, and structure and support were based and limited to the perceptions of 9th grade students.

Another study involving authoritative discipline includes a qualitative study examining authoritative parenting and the relationship to academic achievement (Brown-Richards, 2011). The framework of the study followed Diane Baumrind’s Theory of Parenting Style. Participants were from a midsized urban city in upstate New York. African American adolescents \((n=7)\) in grades 7-10 were selected from an afterschool setting and paid to participate. A majority of the students \((n=6)\) were male. Parents \((n=6)\) of the adolescents participated. All participating parents were the students’ mothers. Students participated in interviews while parents participated in surveys. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained and consent was obtained. Data analysis was completed by coding. Findings of the study revealed parents’ verbal motivation (warmth and support) motivated students to continue to do well and pushed students to want to do well; provided evidence that reinforcement of rules and structure (control/demandingness) demonstrated to be important in the academic achievement of students; and illustrated parenting is not related to student overall GPA. Limitations of this study included small student sample size, small parent sample size, and adolescent’s perception of parent support or non-support is subjective input.

An additional study regarding authoritative discipline is a descriptive qualitative study investigating whether adolescents are influenced by one particular set of nonrelated adults, particularly their friends’ parents (Fletcher, A. C., Steinberg, L., Darling, N. E., & Dornbusch, S. M., 1995). Participants included high school students \((n=4,431)\) from high schools \((n=9)\) in Wisconsin and northern California. The participants differed socioeconomically, ethnically, and came from different family structures and different types of communities. The student gender
make-up was 57% female and 43% male. The study took place during the 1987-1988 school year. Participants completed questionnaires that included the Psychological Autonomy Granting scale and the Strictness-Supervision scale. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained and consent was obtained. Data Comparative analysis was completed. The findings include there is a significant positive relation between authoritativeness and GPA, time spent on homework, and academic confidence among both male and female participants. The findings revealed higher levels of perceived authoritativeness are associated with lower levels of misconduct, internalized distress, and higher level of academic achievement and social adjustment. The level of authoritative parenting in the adolescent peer network is positively related to his/her performance in school despite the degree of authoritativeness in the adolescent’s own household. The study concluded that the network authoritativeness is associated with greater academic competence and less problem behavior among both boys and girls, level of authoritative parenting in the adolescent peer network is positively related to his/her performance in school despite the degree of authoritativeness in the adolescents’ own household, and authoritativeness in the peer network is associated with lower rates of delinquency and substance abuse among both boys and girls despite the level of authoritativeness in the adolescents own household. The findings indicated there was a significance found of network authoritativeness related to work orientation, self-reliance, and self-esteem among girls. The findings also indicated significant correlations between parental authoritativeness and the variables of girls and boys and peer network. Many limitations were identified in this study including the study was conducted in 1987 (25+ years); the participants consisted largely of students from middle class, professional families; validity of parental authoritative practices and non-related adult authoritative practices due to the information being received from the
adolescents; specific parental consent was lacking to obtaining student grades from the official school records; it is unknown if the adolescents were behaviorally well adjusted or less well adjusted; the adolescents’ unwillingness to provide names of the non-related adults; a possibility for bias among the participants was possible as consent had to be obtained from both parent and the adolescent participant; and adolescents with authoritative parents typically react to non-related adults with authoritative practices in a positive manner and these participants were not removed from the study.

**Permissive Discipline**

A study to determine the relationship between three of Baumrind’s parenting styles and the academic achievement among the adolescents who are exposed to the specific parenting styles indicated students are impacted by different parenting styles (Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, & Talib, 2012). This cross-sectional study took place in Sirjan, Iran. The study consisted of high school students (n=382) ranging in age from 15 to 18 (251 female and 131 male). The student sample was comprised from 12 different high schools. Stratified random sampling was used to randomly select students for participation. The instrument utilized in the study was the Parenting Style Scale developed by Diane Baumrind. This instrument consists of 30 items, 10 items each for the authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style, and permissive parenting style. The instrument used a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5). The scale scores range from 10 to 50 for each dimension with a high score indicating a high level of parenting style for the specific dimension. The Cronback alpha values for the parenting style subscales were authoritative .82, authoritarian .82, and permissive .70. The adolescent participants completed the survey. Academic achievement was assessed by student grade points for a one-year period. Grade points range from 0 to 20. The grade points include D

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the variables of the study. Pearson Correlation analysis examined the relationship between the variables, parenting style, and academic achievement. The mean score for the authoritative style was 38.9, authoritarian style was 28.37, and permissive style was 29.92. The mean score for student academic achievement was 17.28, or an A grade. The Pearson Correlation analyses indicated a significant correlation between authoritative parenting ($r=.24, p<.01$) and permissive parenting ($r=.16, p<.01$) in relation to student academic achievement. No significant relationship between authoritarian parenting ($r=.037, p>.05$) and student academic achievement was found. The study’s findings showed a negative relationship between permissive parenting and academic achievement, indicating students with permissive style parents had lower academic achievement than their peers.

Limitations of this study include limiting the population to high school students and no parent self-reporting was incorporated into the study.

**Disengaged Discipline**

Disengaged discipline as a research construct is not currently well represented in the professional literature related to discipline styles of school leaders. The lack of research on disengaged disciple may be due to the lack of school administrators who fit the description of this discipline leadership style. A potential cause may be the individuals who pursue and move toward careers in school administration tend to be motivated and engaged in their work and additional responsibilities. Changes in the Ohio State Teacher Retirement System for retirees beginning in the year 2015 saw an increase in the number of retirements. The increase in retirements was a result of changes to retirement benefits negatively impacting individuals
retiring after August 1, 2015. This exodus of the older generation of administrators may have allowed for a younger group of individuals to secure these administrative positions.

**School Climate**

School climate is a topic addressed by many studies. One study examined is qualitative, analyzing school climate in overachieving schools and comparing to other schools, specifically underachieving/underperforming schools (Voight, Austin, and Hanson, 2013). The sample participants included secondary schools \( n=1,715 \) in California. The participants were assigned an achievement group status of overachieving \( n=40 \), performing as anticipating \( n=1,654 \), and chronically underperforming \( n=20 \). The School Climate Index (SCI) was administered to students from participating schools. The California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS) was accessed to collect the school demographic information for students. Demographic information included student race and proportion of students receiving free or reduced-price meals. CBEDS was used to gather school district data on personnel resources available within a school district. Academic performance indicators were collected and accessed through the California Standardized Testing and Reporting program. The test included English Language Arts (ELA) and math score results from the California Standards Tests (CST) and high school ELA CST and math scores from grade 10 on the California High School Exit Examination. Data collection took place between 2007 and 2011. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained and consent was obtained. Data was analyzed by percentile rank. Findings of the study illustrate a large imbalance in differences between overachieving schools and chronically underperforming schools. Data strongly indicates that a positive school climate impacts student achievement outcomes. School Climate Index for overachieving schools results in a 68 percentile advantage over the chronically underperforming schools at 82\(^{nd}\) and 14\(^{th}\) respectively. Data results on
personnel resources available within a school district showed little to no impact. Limitations to this study include multiple variables, not just school climate, could have an impact on the academic achievement of students and are not explored in this study. Another limitation includes the validity of school climate data was determined from adolescent input.

An additional study on school climate is a qualitative study, examining the relationship between school climate research and educational policy, school improvement practices, and teacher education (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). The sample included all 50 states Departments of Education. Document analysis and descriptive statistical methods were used to collect data from state documents and State Department of Education web sites. Findings of the study revealed a significant gap exists between research findings of school climate importance and state Department of Education’s policy and emphasis on school climate; a significant gap exists between research findings of school climate importance and school improvement practices across the United States; and a significant gap exists between research findings of school climate importance and university level teacher education program emphasis. Limitations of the study included no consensus of a school climate definition has been established, the data was analyzed through the interpretation of the researchers, and the complexity of historical and political factors on school climate were not addressed by the researchers.

The impact of school culture and climate on student academic achievement was studied to determine if a significance was found between the two variables, culture and climate in relation to academic achievement (Macneil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). The quantitative study included schools from the state of Texas (n=29). The schools included high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Each school included in the study had received a performance
rating called the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) from the Texas Department of Education. This TAAS performance rating is assigned to schools in Texas each school year. The accountability ratings issued from the Department of Education include exemplary \((n=16)\), recognized \((n=7)\), acceptable \((n=6)\), or low-performing \((n=0)\). Students from the schools participating in the study \((n=24,684)\) and teachers from the schools participating in the study \((n=1727)\) completed the Organized Health Inventory survey. The Organized Health Inventory survey consists of 10 dimensions. These dimensions include goal focus, communication adequacy, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation, and problem-solving adequacy. The Organized Health Inventory consisted of an 80-question survey using a five-point Likert scale. The Organized Health Inventory instrument has been measured for reliability with an overall coefficient of 0.98. The participating schools were placed into groups based on TAAS performance rating and the Organized Health Inventory was administered. The groupings of schools were compared across the 10 subtests of the Organized Health Inventory using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Descriptive statistics methods were used to analyze means and standard deviations. Based on NCE scores, TAAS performing schools were analyzed on each of the 10 dimensions rating scales. There were significant differences between the three groups (exemplary, recognized and acceptable) across all of the 10 subtests of the Organized Health Inventory. The MANOVA indicated \(F=3.22, \text{df}=2, 34, p<0.001\). For each of the 10 subtests a \(p<0.05\), indicating exemplary schools out-performed acceptable schools. The exemplary schools performed better academically and, according to the Organized Health Inventory, had a healthier climate than the acceptable schools. The study did not show a statistical difference between the exemplary schools and the recognized schools, except in the areas of goal focus and adaption.
Limitations of this study included a small sample size of participating schools and the absence of low-performing schools included in the sample.

An additional study regarding school climate was a quantitative study analyzing student and parent perceptions and comparing the perceptions to the school building’s academic achievement (Nichols & Nichols, 2012). This study investigated the relationship between school climate and the student’s academic achievement as based on standardized tests scores of the overall school building. All participating schools in the study were elementary schools \( (n=33) \) located in a large urban school district in the Midwest. Surveys were administered to elementary students \( (n=6,745) \) in grades three through five and parents \( (n=5,557) \) of the grade three through five students during the 2008-2009 school year. The study instruments consisted of two surveys and the state standardized test scores for each school building. The surveys consisted of an instrument for the student participants and another for the parent participants. The student survey was administered during the school day while the parent survey was administered to parents at fall conferences. The student survey consisted of seven questions while the parent survey consisted of 11 questions. Both surveys were scored on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree). After implementation of the surveys, only four items from the student survey and only four items from the parent survey were used for comparative purposes. The state standardized test scores, gathered from the state department of education website, were used to categorize schools into two school achievement groups. These groups consisted of high-scoring schools \( (n=19) \), or those schools where more than 50% of the student population passed both the math and English areas of the state tests, and low-scoring schools \( (n=14) \), or those schools where less than 50% of the student population passed both the math and English areas of the state tests. The results of the comparisons showed no significant
difference in school climate from students’ perspectives that attended high-scoring schools or low-scoring schools. The mean score of the climate survey from high-scoring schools was 4.55 on the five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the climate survey from low-scoring schools was 4.63 on the five-point Likert scale. The results of the comparisons showed no significant difference in school climate from the perspective of parents of students who attended high-scoring schools or low-scoring schools. The mean score of the climate survey from parents of students attending high-scoring schools was 4.60 on the five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the climate survey from parents of low-scoring schools was 4.67 on the five-point Likert scale. When socioeconomic status was added to the analysis, a significant positive correlation was indicated (r=.45, p<.01) between positive student climate perceptions and higher socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status data showed a negative correlation among student academic performance and student climate perceptions (r=-.821, p<.01). Limitations to this study include a limited variability on the student and parent surveys administered, the reliability of the survey instruments were unable to be obtained, and the heavy reliability of the participants’ self-reporting.

Exploring administrator’s use of modeling of engaging, energizing methods to the teaching staff to achieve a positive school climate was the focus of a qualitative study (Barrett & Breyer, 2014). The study took place in a rural elementary school in the Southeastern United States. The student population (n=654) included pre-kindergarten students to grade 5. The demographics of the student body was a combination of Caucasian (n=70%), African American (n=14%), and Hispanic (n=15%) students with a high population of free and reduced meal students (n=60%). In this study, an elementary administrative team modeled different teaching strategies to the building staff at weekly staff meetings. The teachers were then allowed to ask
questions of the administrative team on the implementation of the strategy in the classroom setting. The teaching staff was asked to attempt to implement the modeled strategy in their individual classroom over the next week. The length of the study encompassed a six-week period. Over the six-week period, multiple instruments were used to collect the data. Teachers were administered anonymous surveys, scheduled administrative classroom observations, and non-scheduled administrative walkthroughs with an observation checklists were used as data collection instruments by the administrators over the study timeframe. A conclusion was drawn through the examination of survey results, observation data, and informal walkthroughs. The results of the study indicated a positive impact on teacher motivation and implementation of more effective teaching strategies being utilized in the classroom. Teachers reported a higher rate of engaged students in the classroom and a decrease in student discipline problems. Administrators were viewed as being more positive leaders and knowledgeable about the field of education. At the end of the study, the administrative team indicated a feeling the teaching staff had an improved overall morale. Limitations of the study included the primary researchers were the administrators implementing the strategies with the staff and the “collectors of the data,” the teachers may feel obligated to act and answer in a specific way because their direct supervisor is part of the research team, and the study lasted for only a six-week period.

Safe and Supportive

A recent study investigated the theory that an authoritative school climate characterized by high levels of disciplinary structure and student support would be connected to greater academic engagement, better academic grades, and higher educational aspirations of students (Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2016). The study, conducted in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Education, was a mixed-methods study and included more than 98% of all middle
schools \( n=423 \) of 430 and high schools \( n=323 \) of 324 in the state of Virginia. Students in grades 7 and 8 \( n=39,364 \) and students in grades 9-12 \( n=48,027 \) participated in the study. Parental consent was obtained for student participants. Two sampling options existed in the study. A school could choose to invite all students to participate in the survey or they could implement a random number list to select at least 25 students in each grade to participate. The demographics collected for the middle school students included grade (52.2% grade 7, 47.8% grade 8), gender (51.7% female, 48.3% male), and ethnicity (52.4% White, 18.2% Black, 12.8% Hispanic, 3.4% Asian, 1.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.5% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and 15.6% bi-racial). Additionally, self-reported parental educational data (24.5% completed postgraduate studies, 23.7% completed 4-year college degree program, 14.3% completed a 2-year college or technical educational degree, 28.8% high school graduate, 8.7% did not graduate from high school) was collected from the students. The demographics collected for the high school students included grade (26.1% grade 9, 26% grade 10, 24.9% grade 11, and 23.1% grade 12), gender (51.4% female, 48.7% male), and ethnicity (59.1% White, 18.6% Black, 10.5% Hispanic, 4.0% Asian, 1.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.9% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and 15.8% bi-racial). Additionally, students self-reported parental educational data (24.5% completed postgraduate studies, 23.7% completed 4-year college degree program, 14.3% completed a 2-year college or technical educational degree, 28.8% high school graduate, 8.7% did not graduate from high school). The students were administered the Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey in an anonymous online format. The survey was administered in the spring of 2013 (middle schools) and the spring of 2014 (high school). All questions must be answered or the computerized survey would not allow the student to continue to the next question. The survey had built in validity screening questions. One question included “I am
telling the truth on this survey?” with allowable answers as strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree (surveys where students answered strongly disagree or disagree where removed from the results). A second validity screening question included “How many questions on this survey did you answer truthfully?” with allowable answers as all of them, all but one or two of them, most of them, some of them, and only a few or none of them (surveys where students answered some of them or only a few or none of them where removed from the study. The survey had multiple areas of measurement including discipline structure, student support, student engagement, academic grades and educational aspirations, and demographic information. The discipline structure measure was a seven-item scale measuring perceived fairness and strictness of school discipline. The discipline structure measure utilized a four-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree). This scale had a Cronbach’s alpha = .77 for the middle school sample and .78 for the high school sample. The student support measure was an eight-item scale designed to measure the perceived supportiveness of teacher-student relationships. The student support measure utilized a four-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree). This scale had a Cronbach’s alpha = .85 for the middle school sample and .87 for the high school sample. The student engagement measure was a six-item scale assessing affective and cognitive engagement. This scale had a Cronbach’s alpha = .77 for the middle school sample and .78 for the high school sample. The academic grades and educational aspirations measure included the question “What grades did you make on your last report card?” The answer bank to this question included seven response choices (1=mostly As, 2=mostly As and Bs, 3=mostly Bs, 4=mostly Bs and Cs, 5=mostly Cs, 6=mostly Cs and Ds, and 7=mostly Ds and Fs). Educational aspirations were scored by asking the question “How far do you expect to go in school?” The answer bank to this question
included six response choices (0=I do not expect to graduate from high school, 1=I might or might not graduate from high school, 2=I expect to graduate from high school, 3=I expect to graduate from a 2-year college or technical school, 4=I expect to graduate from a 4-year college and 5=I expect to complete postgraduate studies). The demographics section of the survey included gender, minority status, and parental educational level (1=did not graduate, 2=graduated from a high school, 3=graduated from a 2-year college or technical school, 4=graduated from a 4-year college, and 5=completed postgraduate studies). For the study, the achievement test passing rates were gathered from the Virginia Department of Education from the 2013-14 school year. Individual student scores were not obtained as overall passage percentages of the individual school were used as the measure. Using descriptive statistics to analyze the survey results, the multivariate analytic approach was used to accommodate any associations among the outcome variables, multi-level modeling was used to distinguish between-school effects from within-school effects, and a comprehensive multilevel modeling approach was used to analyze continuous and categorical student-level outcomes. Middle level and high school students reported similar levels of engagement (M=18.47, SD=3.06 for middle school; M=18.56, SC=2.97 for high school), support (M=23.65, SD=4.59 for middle school; M=23.75, SC=4.00 for high school) and discipline (M=18.60, SD=3.94 for middle school; M=18.60, SC=3.74 for high school). School grades were self-reported as 21% of middle school and 18.3% of high school students reported mostly As, 40% of middle school and 39.6% of high school students reported mostly As and Bs, 5.7% of middle school and 7.3% of high school students reported mostly Bs, 20% of middle school and 21% in high school reported mostly Bs and Cs, 3.8% of middle school and 4.7% of high school students reported mostly Cs, 6.7% of middle school and 6.6% of high school students reported mostly Cs and Ds, and 2.6% of middle
school and 2.5% of high school students reported mostly Ds and Fs. Educational aspirations included 32.3% of middle school and 39.7% of high school students expect to complete postgraduate studies, 44.4% of middle school and 35.6% of high school students expect to complete a 4-year college program, 12.0% of middle school and 12.0% of high school students expect to graduate from high school, and 3.6% of middle school and 2.5% of high school students did not expect to graduate from high school. Correlations ranged from .33 to .56 engagement, grades, and educational aspirations. High levels of support and disciplinary structure were linked to higher level of engagement ($r=.75$ and $.78$ for middle school; $r=.84$ and $.81$ for high school), grades ($r=.26$ and .30 for middle school; $r=.35$ and .33 for high school), and aspirations ($r=.07$ and .06 for middle school; $r=.16$ and .23 for high school). Boys reported lower levels of grades and aspirations than their counterparts, but there was no significant difference in student engagement. The study’s school-level comparisons included schools with higher levels of minority students were more likely to have lower student engagement ($B=-.16$, $p<.05$) but higher student aspirations ($B=.53$ $p<.001$). School climate measures were significantly related with all three outcomes (all $p$ values>.05). Students who reported higher levels of support reported higher levels of engagement ($B=.42$), grades (log odds=.08) and educational aspirations (log odds=.07). Students who perceived higher levels of discipline structure were more likely to be engaged ($B=.23$), reported higher grades (log odds=.09) and aspirations (log odds=.02). Between-school comparisons indicated significant relations between engagement and both support and disciplinary structure ($B=.44$ for support and $B=.46$ for discipline structure; $p$ values <.001). Higher level of support was linked to higher grades ($B=.18$; $p<.05$). Discipline structure was not found to significantly predict grades or aspirations at the between-school level comparisons. Limitations to this study include not all components of the
standard definition of the authoritative school were used, most measures were based on student self-reporting, and correlational findings cannot establish causal relationships and are not open to multiple interpretations.

Teacher’s perception of safety in an authoritative school climate, specifically a climate considered high in support and structure, was the focus of a study consisting of Virginia high schools (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2012). The mixed-methods study included over 92% of all high schools in the state of Virginia (n=289). Eligible high schools must consist of grades 9-12, provide students the opportunity to graduate with a diploma, and the majority of the students attending must be under the age of 18. The participants included students in grade 9 (n=7,318) and teachers of grade 9 students (n=2,870). The participants were randomly selected with a numbering system. Each school was supplied a list of random numbers to be matched up with an alphabetized list of students. Parental consent was obtained from the chosen students. Of the originally selected students, 73% participated in the study. School principals were provided an additional random number list to contact alternate participants to complete the school’s student sample. Of the final student participants, 49% were females and 51% were males. The self-reported racial demographic breakdown of the participating students included 63% Caucasian, 22% African American, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, 5% other and less than 1% American Indian. A similar random number system was used to select the building’s teachers of the grade 9 students. Of the selected teachers, 64% were female and 36% were male. The self-reported racial demographic breakdown of the participating teachers included 83% Caucasian, 12% African American, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian American, 1% other and less than 1% American Indian. The teacher’s self-reported teaching experience included 1-5 years (n=36%), 6-10 years (n=21%), 11-15 years (n=13%), or more then 15 years (n=30%). Data from the US census report
of population density was used to determine population density for cities and counties. Annual crime records data obtained from the Virginia Department of State Police and local law enforcement agencies for each city or county were obtained. Crime rates for each city or county were calculated by dividing the number of crimes by the census report data. Online surveys were used with both the students and teachers to collect survey data. The students completed an eight-item instrument designed to gauge student willingness to seek help from school personnel. A four-point Likert scale was used to calculate results and included the options of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Higher scores signified a higher willingness by the student to seek help. This survey had a Cronbach’s alpha of .78. The teachers completed a seven-item instrument designed to measure the frequency teachers encouraged students to seek help from school staff for a variety of problems. A four-point Likert scale was used to calculate results and included the options of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Higher scores signified a higher willingness to seek help. This survey had a Cronbach’s alpha of .78. Both the students and teachers completed the seven-item experience of school rules instrument measuring their perceptions of the fairness and uniformly enforcement of the school buildings rules. A four-point Likert scale was used to calculate results and included the options of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Higher scores signified a more positive perception of the school rules. This survey had a Cronbach’s alpha of .86 and .72. Teachers completed the seven-item teacher victimization scale. This scale is designed to measure teachers’ experience of victimization from their perspective. The teachers were asked to respond to questions with a “yes” or “no” answer. This survey had a Cronbach’s alpha of .72. In addition to the above instruments, data was collected from the Virginia Department of Education on serious disciplinary infractions, which is a required yearly submission by all schools. Univariate
analyses, regression analyses and hierarchically nested regression analyses were conducted with the collected data. The least frequent victimization act on teachers was a weapon pulled, 0.4% of teachers reporting, and a physical attack requiring doctor care, 1.1% of teachers reporting. Victimization attacks not requiring doctor care was reported by 2.9% of teachers; personal theft of a value higher than $10.00 was reported by 15.1% of teachers; teachers being threatened by a student included 19.9% of teachers; receiving obscene remarks or gestures from a student included 43.2% of teachers; and being spoken to in a disrespectful manner by a student included 83.6% of teachers. The analysis of school discipline records showed staff member threats occurred at approximately three per 1,000 students each school year. The school records of staff threats correlated with teacher reports of victimization ($r=.38, p<.001$). School climate variables were interrelated indicating schools with greater help seeking of students had a tendency to have school rules perceived as fair ($r=.21$ to $.51, p<.001$). Schools with higher percentages of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals were located in areas with higher crime rates ($r=.31, p<.001$) and these areas consisted of a higher percentage of African Americans in the racial makeup ($r=.46, p<.001$). Schools with higher percentages of African American students had higher teacher-reported victimization ($r=.47, p<.05$). In schools where teachers reported a greater structure and support for students, the teacher self-reports consisted of fewer teacher victimizations reported ($r=-.10, p<.05$). A lower rate of faculty threats was reported in larger schools ($r=-.16, p<.05$) while schools in neighborhoods of higher crime rate had higher rates of faculty threats ($r=.44, p<.05$). Schools where the students and teachers perceived higher support for students had lower threat rates ($r=-.17, r=.16, p<.05$, respectively). Limitations of the study include the participants only included grade 9 students and teachers rather than a larger range of grade levels, school records are not precise measures of occurrences, the measures of structure
and support did not encompass all attributes needed to have a comprehensive feeling of an authoritative school, and other characteristics identified in previous research of school climate were not included in the variable.

In a study investigating the effect of principal’s leadership style on school outcome, a focus was on the indirect relationship between the leadership style and the school environment (Al-Safran, Brown, & Wiseman, 2014). Included in the study were 183 schools located in the United States of America and 27 schools located in Kuwait. The study limited the student data to students in grade 8. School principals and teachers were participants in surveys. The instrument used to collect academic data was The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The data from the TIMSS is available online to the public. Surveys were also administered to the students and teachers. Parametric interval data and non-parametric nominal (categorical) data were used in this study. This quantitative study utilized descriptive statistics and an ANOVA in the statistical analysis. There is a causal effect, both direct and indirect, between the relationship of the principal’s leadership style and school outcome (academic). In addition, there is a causal effect of the relationship of the school’s environment and school outcome. The indirect leadership style of the principal and school outcome relationship seem to be strong. School principals in the United States of America are more likely to promote, encourage and create cooperation and collaboration among teachers than principals in Kuwait. There is no one-size-fits-all leadership model for schools, and the appropriate principal leadership style depends on the culture in which the school exists. Limitations of the study include a low number of participating schools both in the United States of America and in Kuwait and the student data only includes students in grade 8.
Summary

The ultimate outcome of this study is to identify and close the gap of the impact authoritative school discipline has on the academic achievement of middle school students. Diane Baumrind’s Theory of Parenting Style strongly suggests that authoritative parenting has a significant positive influence on children (Brown-Richards, 2011). A school with a lack of discipline has been reported as having lower academic outcomes. Voight, Austin, and Hanson (2013) provide research implying school climate as a very important variable explaining why some schools are more successful than others. According to Pasternak (2013) “Many of the research findings in the social sciences, pedagogy and education argue for the strong relationship between discipline and academic achievement, with a lack of discipline considered as a factor in declining achievement” (p. 2). Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) have found that governmental educational policies have a large gap in emphasizing the need to include verbiage in state policy to lead schools in the direction of improving school climate as a way towards school improvement. Finding the connection between authoritative school discipline, school climate and the student academic achievement may improve the education of students. Overall, many studies have been completed on the general topic of school discipline. There is a lack of research completed on authoritative school discipline. Voight, Austin, and Hanson (2013) provide research confirming positive school climate positively impacts schools. Their study illustrates positive school climate increases the odds of a school overachieving academically; however, research is lacking on how authoritative school discipline styles impact the school climate or how authoritative school discipline styles impact student academic achievement. Future research could include exploring overachieving schools administration’s school discipline style compared to underachieving schools. Additionally, research could be conducted on
comparing administration’s school discipline styles with schools where a positive school climate exists.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Research has shown the lack of school discipline can impact the education of students. There are four main school discipline styles building level administration may use while leading their respective school buildings. These discipline styles are the authoritarian style, the authoritative style, the permissive style, and the disengaged style (Gunnoe, 2013). In this study, the authoritative style of school discipline is the main focus. This study explores whether the authoritative discipline style impacts student academic outcomes and the school climate from the teacher perspective. This chapter will describe and explain the study’s research design, the participants of the study, the instruments and data sources used to collect the data, the data collection procedures, the research questions used as the focus of the study, the data analysis, and the assumptions of the researcher. Continuous improvement of schools is important, providing our students the opportunity for future success. The results of this study may influence how building administration will practice discipline styles in their respective buildings. Knowing a specific discipline style is more impactful on school climate and student academic outcomes than other school discipline styles a school leader can improve their school by modeling the most successful style.

Research Design

This study set out to determine if the authoritative school discipline style is associated with a difference in middle school student academic performance and school climate. Using the causal-comparative method, the researcher was able to determine if a connection or parallel existed between the variables (school discipline style and student academic outcomes; school discipline style and school climate). According to Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2014) “The most commonly used test in causal-comparative studies is a t-test for differences between means.
When more than two groups are used, then either an analysis of variance or an analysis of covariance is the appropriate test. Analysis of covariance is particularly helpful in causal-comparative research because a researcher cannot always match the comparison groups on all relevant variables other than the ones of primary interest (p. 371).

The research design of this study required multiple steps to complete the causal-comparative analysis. The first step included grouping middle schools into styles of school discipline (the independent variable): authoritative style or non-authoritative style (the authoritarian style, the permissive style, and the disengaged style). The second step was to analyze the dependent, or outcome, variables of student standardized test scores and the school climate surveys, completed by teachers, to determine if a relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables. If a relationship between variables was found, the correlation could show a positive correlation or a negative correlation.

Participants

The participants of this study can be categorized into two different groups. The different groups include the middle school building and the staff members within the middle school building. Both groups of participants will be voluntarily participating in the study.

The sample of the middle school buildings included in the study was a result of convenience sampling. The participating schools included public middle schools located in Ohio. The study was limited to Ohio public schools because parochial schools and schools outside the state of Ohio are not required to administer the same standardized tests as Ohio public schools. Due to these variations, conducting the research within Ohio public schools exclusively allowed the researcher to keep the dependent variable of the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test comparable in the research. The school buildings must include
grades 6-8 students. Participating schools can contain students in grade 5; however, the grade 5 students are not included in the study. Because not all middle schools include students in grade 5, comparing data would be inconsistent, thus the need to exclude this grade level from the study. Schools that have students in grades 6-8 housed with high school students are excluded from the study. Excluding schools where high school students are housed with middle school students allows the focus group to be similar and comparable. Students being influenced by peer pressure increases up through and peaks at the age of 15, remains level through the age of 18, and then decreases to levels of pre-adolescence (Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion, & McCord, 2005). High school students may influence the overall climate and “feeling” of a school building, and may impair the study when compared to school buildings without the high school student influence. The middle schools must have a minimum of 200 students enrolled in grades 6-8. Setting the population minimum, survey results are less influenced by one or a few participants contributing to the study results. All participating middle schools had an administrative team with tenure in the current administrative position for a minimum of 12 months. A new administrator’s influence on school discipline may change the climate of the school building, and the previous administrative team would have had an influence on the state standardized test scores from the previous school year, since the Ohio Department of Education’s tests results are reported the following school year. This change may skew data and hinder the validity of the study.

Because of the nature of the study, a moderate population size of middle schools must be included to have a quality sample size. Participation in this study was offered to all public middle schools in the state of Ohio with a final sample of 21 middle schools participating. A total of 17 middle schools were grouped as authoritative schools, while four (4) middle schools
were grouped as non-authoritative. The non-authoritative group of schools included the following breakdown: one (1) authoritarian style, three (3) permissive style, and zero (0) disengaged style.

The participating staff includes grade 6-8 teachers at each participating middle school building. Participation was offered to all teachers regardless of subject area, years of experience, gender, or race. Teacher participation in the study was voluntary. The University of Findlay’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) process was followed to ethically receive approval for human subjects to participate in the study.

**Instrumentation & Data Sources**

This study included an independent variable, perceived administrator discipline style, and two dependent variables, student achievement and school climate. To gather data for each of the variables, there were multiple instruments and data sources used in this study. They included an instrument to group schools by perceived administrative discipline style (categorical grouping), the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test results (quantitative data), and a school climate instrument (quantitative data).

**Independent variable grouping.** To group middle school buildings into discipline styles, the middle school teaching staff was asked a question on the survey used to determine the building’s main discipline style. This question provided definitions of the four discipline styles (the authoritarian style, the authoritative style, the permissive style, and the disengaged style). In an attempt to avoid connotations drawn by Baumrind’s actual labels, and to prevent errors of the terms authoritarian and authoritative among the participating teachers, Baumrind’s labels were substituted with Style 1, Style 2, Style 3, and Style 4. The descriptive definitions for each of the discipline styles as presented to the participants are presented in Table 1.
Table 1

*Descriptive Definitions of Discipline Styles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style Sub Label</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style 1</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>This style attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the student in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. The disciplinarian values obedience as a virtue and favors punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will at points where the student’s actions or beliefs conflict with what they think is right conduct. The disciplinarian believes in keeping the student in his/her place and in restricting his/her autonomy. The disciplinarian regards the preservation of order and traditional structure as a highly valued end in itself. The disciplinarian does not encourage verbal give and take, believing that the student should accept their word for what is right (Baumrind, 1966).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style 2</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>This style attempts to direct the student’s activities but in a rational, issue-oriented manner. The disciplinarian encourages verbal give and take, shares with the student the reasoning behind a policy, and solicits student’s objections when they refuse to conform. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued. Therefore the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The disciplinarian exerts firm control at points of adult-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions. The disciplinarian enforces their own perspective as an adult, but recognizes the student's individual interests and special ways. The disciplinarian affirms the student's present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct. The disciplinarian uses reason, power, and shaping by regime and reinforcement to achieve their objectives, and does not base decisions on group consensus or the individual student’s desires (Baumrind, 1967).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style 3</th>
<th>Permissive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This style attempts to behave in a non-punitive, acceptant and affirmative manner towards the student’s impulses, desires, and actions. The disciplinarian consults with the student about policy decisions and gives explanations for school rules. The disciplinarian makes few demands for school responsibility and orderly behavior. The disciplinarian presents himself/herself to the student as a resource for the student to use as they wish, not as an ideal for them to emulate, or as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering the student ongoing or future behavior. The disciplinarian allows the student to regulate their own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage the student to obey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
externally defined standards. The disciplinarian attempts to use reason and manipulation, but not overt power to accomplish the disciplinarian ends (Baumrind, 1966).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style 4</th>
<th>Disengaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This style attempts to be uninvolved, detached, dismissive or hands-off. The disciplinarian is low in support and control, generally not involved with the students, are disengaged, undemanding, low in responsiveness, and do not set limits with the students. The disciplinarian dismisses the student’s emotions and opinions. The disciplinarian is emotionally unsupportive of the students and provides no limit setting (Maccoby &amp; Martin, 1983).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the descriptive definitions, the teachers were then asked to select which discipline style most represented their building administrative team’s discipline style. To place a school building into a discipline style group, the “majority rules” philosophy was used. Whichever style was selected most by the teaching staff was the discipline style group in which the school was placed or labeled. The buildings where the outcome was authoritarian, permissive, or disengaged were grouped into the non-authoritative group. By creating two groups, authoritative discipline and non-authoritative discipline groups, the ability to isolate and compare authoritative discipline to other discipline styles is capable. While the “majority rules” philosophy was used to group the school building into authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline style, the percentages of all discipline styles are reported in Table 2.
Table 2

*Participating School Buildings Perceived Discipline Style*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Discipline Style</th>
<th>Total Participating Buildings</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Groupings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian Style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative Style</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive Style</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged Style</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dependent variable: Student achievement.** One dependent variable in this study is student achievement. To determine the middle school students’ academic achievement, the results from the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test scores will be used; specifically, the building-wide passage percentage of grade 6, 7, and 8 English Language Arts and math test scores. The study will compare these scores to the two independent variable groups, authoritative discipline and non-authoritative discipline.

**Dependent variable: School climate.** To gather data on school climate, a school climate survey was administered to the teaching staff. The instrument used was the *Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques (DSCS)*. This instrument has been validated and tested for reliability by the authors, George Bear, Chunyan Yang, Lindsey Mantz, Elizabeth Pasipanodya, Sarah Hearn, and Deborah Boyer. According to the Technical Manual of the DSCS, “For the total score of the DSCS-T/S, consisting of the sum of raw scores on all items of the seven subscales, high reliability was found across grade-level and position groups (range .94 to .97, with an overall alpha of .97 for all students combined)” (Bear, et al., 2014, p. 69).

The DSCS administered to teachers consisted of 63 questions. This survey had two sections including Part I-School Climate Scale and Part II-Techniques Scale. Part I consists of
10 subscales. These subscales include teacher-student relations, student-student relations, respect for diversity, student engagement school-wide, clarity of expectations, fairness of rules, school safety, bullying school-wide, teacher-home communications, and staff relations (Bear, Hearn, & Mantz, 2012). Part II consists of three subscales. These subscales include use of positive behavior techniques, use of punitive techniques, and use of SEL techniques (Bear, Hearn, & Mantz, 2012). Teacher attitudes and opinions of the school climate were measured using a four-point Likert Scale.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for the study included multiple steps. An email was sent statewide to building administrators and district Superintendents to solicit their middle school’s participation in the study. See Appendix B for the solicitation letters. Participation was also solicited in person at local educational service center superintendent and principal meetings. These meetings took place at the two local educational service centers in northwest Ohio, the Northwest Ohio Educational Service Center and Lake Erie West Educational Service Center. These educational service centers were chosen due to my close proximity and availability to attend the meetings. When participation responses were secured, further correspondence and directions were provided to each participating building principal.

An email with complete directions was sent to all participating school administrators. Each school was assigned a survey code so each school could be identified. This identification was needed so the school building could be categorized by administrative team’s discipline style based on the teacher survey responses, and the teacher climate study information could be linked to the school’s perceived discipline style. In addition, this identification of the school building was needed so student standardized test scores could be linked to the teacher’s perceived
discipline style of the building’s administrative team. Included in the e-mail was a link to the
online survey. The survey was conducted using Google Forms. The administrator was to share
this link with the building’s teaching staff. The link allowed the teachers to take both survey
sections: the one-question section to group the administrative team’s discipline and the section
containing the Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive,
Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques.

The building administrator was asked to send the information to the building’s teaching
staff as soon as receiving the information. Two reminder emails to the building administrator
were sent. The first reminder email was sent one week after the initial email and the second
reminder email was sent one week after the first reminder. The reminder emails asked the
building administrator to resend the information to the building’s teaching staff asking for their
participation.

One week after the last reminder email, the survey links were closed. This gave the
participating school’s teachers three weeks to complete the surveys. At that time, the data was
downloaded to allow the researcher to begin analyzing the data for the survey.

Research Questions

1. Is school discipline associated with a difference in middle school students’
   standardized test scores?

2. What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate
   (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive and social emotional learning
   techniques scale)?
Data Analysis

In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The data from the Google Forms were exported to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to allow the researcher the ability to complete the statistical analysis. While the quantitative data of the study is important, it alone does not tell the whole story. After statistical analysis was completed, the researcher utilized descriptive statistics to describe the basic features of the data. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2014), “The major advantage of descriptive statistics is that they permit researchers to describe the information contained in many, many scores with just a few indices, such as the mean and median” (p. 187). These summaries, in conjunction with the statistical analysis, attempt to provide the whole story. Additionally, after analysis of the study’s data, inferential statistics were used to generalize the outcome. Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2014) state, “Inferential statistics are certain types of procedures that allow researchers to make inferences about a population based on findings from a sample” (p. 221). For example, using inferences, the researcher made deductions to generalize how the school climate of middle school buildings would be impacted based on the discipline style of the school’s administration. In addition, the researcher made inferences to generalize the students’ success on standardized tests of a middle school building based on the discipline style of the school’s administration.

The data analysis of the one-question section used to group the schools into and determine the independent variable, school discipline styles, followed the “majority rules” philosophy. After collecting the completed surveys, results were counted and tallied. The discipline style receiving the most selections determined which grouping the middle school was placed. These groups include authoritative style or non-authoritative style (the authoritarian
style, the permissive style, or the disengaged style). This independent variable was used in both of the research questions in the study.

**Research question #1.** The first research question of this study asks if the school building’s administrative discipline style, as perceived by the teachers, has an impact on the students’ standardized test score. The dependent variable in the research question pertaining to the students’ standardized test score was determined using the school’s passage rate on the Ohio Department of Education’s (ODE) grade 6, 7, and 8 English Language Arts and math tests, specifically the grade level passage percentage. The test results used were from the most recent ODE report card for the school building. The higher the passage percentage the more positive the students’ testing results, and vice versa. The school building’s overall passage percentage for all six standardized tests is calculated by averaging the six standardized test passage rates. The six test scores are grade 6 English Language Arts, grade 6 math, grade 7 English Language Arts, grade 7 math, grade 8 English Language Arts, and grade 8 math.

After the data for the grade 6, 7, and 8 English Language Arts and math passage percentage for each participating school was collected and an overall passage percentage was calculated, the data was analyzed using a t-test. This statistical test compared the variance of the schools grouped as authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline style. The t-test is an appropriate test as there is only one independent variable, school discipline style, but numerous school buildings included in the study. The t-test will reveal if a statistical difference exists between different school discipline styles and student standardized test scores, specifically passage percentages. In addition, if the t-test indicates no difference between the groups, Cohen’s $d$ will be calculated to compare the means of the groups. Cohen’s $d$ will determine if the effect size may be impacting the $t$-test results.
Research question #2. The second research question of this study asks if the school building’s administrative discipline style, as perceived by the teachers, impacts the school climate. The dependent variable in the research question pertaining to school climate was determined by a school climate survey, specifically the Delaware School Climate Survey. The data analysis of the Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques followed the recommended procedure provided by the creators of the instrument. The authors have validated the survey. Each survey question was scored using the Likert Scale scoring system. The Likert Scale scoring system used is a four-point scale with a score of “1” being negative and a score of “4” being positive. A spreadsheet was created to score completed surveys. The result of each teacher survey was entered into the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet calculated the total scores for each scale of the survey. The teacher school climate survey administered included: Part I-School Climate Scale and Part II-Techniques Scale.

After the data for the teacher school climate survey was entered into and scored by the spreadsheet, the data was analyzed using a $t$-test. This statistical test compared the variance of the schools grouped as authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline style. The $t$-test is an appropriate test as there is only one independent variable, school discipline style, but numerous school buildings included in the study. The $t$-test will reveal if a statistical difference exists between different school discipline styles and positive or negative school climates. In addition, if the $t$-test indicates no difference between the groups, Cohen’s $d$ will be calculated to compare the means of the groups. Cohen’s $d$ will determine if the effect size may be impacting the $t$-test results.
Assumptions

Assumptions are a part of this study, as with all research, and cannot be overlooked. There are a number of assumptions in this study, many which revolve around the participants and the human factor. A few assumptions revolve around the instruments implemented to gather data.

The number of assumptions involving the human factor is significant. One assumption is the teachers will answer the survey questions honestly and without bias. Participation is voluntary; however, teachers may feel obligated to participate. Because of this perceived obligation, teachers may answer the questions how they believe their building administrator would like rather than answering the questions honestly, which may impact the data and outcome of the study.

Another assumption regarding the study’s surveys is the teachers fully understood the questions being asked. While the Delaware School Climate Survey administered was written specifically for teachers, it is an assumption of this study the participants understood all questions. It is also assumed they took the time needed to read and answer all questions. For the instrument used to group schools into school discipline styles, it is the assumption the teacher understood all four discipline style definitions and accurately selected the perceived building administrative discipline style.

The instruments used in this study, as well as the data collected from the Ohio Department of Education, must be valid. The teachers completed a survey to group their building into a discipline style using their perception and completed the Delaware School Climate Survey. These instruments must collect valid data for the study to be accurate. It is also
an assumption the scoring of the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test scores used in this study was accurately completed by the Department of Education, and accurately reported.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The results of the study and important data analysis information are reported in this chapter. This dissertation is a research study analyzing discipline styles of middle school administrators and the impact the style has on student academic achievement based on state standardized test scores and the impact on the school climate from the teacher’s perspective. The study took place in the state of Ohio. The data contained in this study was collected from the Ohio Department of Education’s website and data collected through an online survey provided to teachers of participating middle schools. Participating schools were categorized into discipline styles based on the teacher’s perception of the school administrative team’s discipline techniques. The state standardized test scores included the tested subjects of English Language Arts and math of students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The constructs of the school climate survey were calculated utilizing the instrument’s scales, the School Climate Scale and the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale. Using statistical analysis tools and descriptive statistics, the researcher used the collected data discussed above to calculate and answer the study’s research questions.

Both research questions utilized the independent variable school discipline style. The independent variable was determined from the online survey instrument completed by the teaching staff of each participating middle school. The school was categorized into a discipline style following the “majority rules” method; the discipline style selected most by the building’s teaching staff determined the discipline style category for the building’s administrative team. The different categories included authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and disengaged. The categories of authoritarian, permissive, and disengaged were then grouped to create a group
labeled non-authoritative. This allowed the researcher to analyze two groups: authoritative schools and non-authoritative schools.

The first research question examined state standardized test scores. These tests scores included the tested subjects of English Language Arts and math for students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The passage percentage for each school was calculated using the mean of the tests for each school building. These test scores were collected from the Ohio Department of Education’s website. The scores consisted of testing completed during the 2015-2016 school year and reported in the fall of 2016. The researcher determined if there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores on student standardized test scores between authoritative discipline schools and non-authoritative discipline schools using a t-test analysis. In addition, Cohen’s d was calculated to compare the means of the groups. Cohen’s d measures the size of the mean difference between groups irrespective of the sample size of the study.

The second research question examined school climate. The Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques was administered to teachers of the participating schools. This survey was administered online using Google Forms. The survey consisted of 63 questions scored with a four-point Likert scale. Each individual school was given an overall score for each scale, the School Climate Scale and the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale. Each scales overall score was determined by totaling the subscales. The subscale scores were calculated by totaling the mean score for each individual question included in the subscale’s itemized list of questions. Each individual question in the survey was assigned a mean score by averaging the submitted responses from the school’s teaching staff. Using the mean score for each individual question allowed for a variance in the total number of participants
from each participating school. This scoring system followed the instructions and recommendation of the survey creators. Both scales of the *Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques* were analyzed using a *t*-test analysis. The *t*-test analysis allowed the researcher to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores on school climate from the teacher’s perspective between authoritative discipline schools and non-authoritative discipline schools. In addition, Cohen’s *d* was calculated to compare the means of the groups. Cohen’s *d* measures the size of the mean difference between groups irrespective of the sample size of the study. The subscales were examined further by comparing the difference in means for both groups.

**Characteristics of the Sample**

All administrators of Ohio public middle schools were invited to allow their middle school staff to participate in the study. All teachers from the participating schools were then invited to participate in the survey. Both school and teacher participation was voluntary. Schools and teachers were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time.

A few conditions must have been met for a school administrator to accept the invitation to participate in the study. The school building must contain grades 5-8 or grades 6-8 only. The school must be an Ohio public school. The school must have a minimum of 200 total students in grades 6-8. The building principal must have served in the current administrative position for a minimum of 12 months. If all of these requirements were met, a school administrator could opt to have their school participate in the study.
A total of 22 Ohio public middle schools accepted the offer to participate in the study. Of the 22 accepting schools, 21 schools actually participated in the study. After accepting the invitation to participate, one school administrator chose to withdraw their school for unknown reasons. Of the remaining 21 participating schools, a total of 17 middle schools were grouped as authoritative schools and four (4) middle schools were grouped as non-authoritative schools. The non-authoritative group of schools included one (1) authoritarian style, three (3) permissive styles, and zero (0) disengaged style.

A total of 239 teachers volunteered to participate in the study by completing the survey. From the 21 participating schools, a total of 614 teachers had the opportunity to participate in the study. The overall participation rate from all possible teachers was 38.93%. Participation ranged from six (6) to 19 teachers per participating school, with an average of 11.38 participating teachers per school. The size of the school’s teaching staff ranged from 13 teachers to 68 teachers, with an average of 29.24 teachers per school. The teacher participation percentage ranged from 16% to 85% among participating middle schools.

**Instrument Validity and Reliability**

This study contained an independent variable, perceived administrator discipline style, and two dependent variables, student achievement and school climate. Multiple instruments and data sources were used in the study. They included an instrument to group schools by perceived administrative discipline style (categorical grouping), the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test results (quantitative data), and a school climate instrument (quantitative data).

The instrument used to group schools by perceived administrative discipline style (categorical grouping) was a one-question survey completed by the participating teachers. The one-question survey consisted of providing the definition/description of the four different school
discipline styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and disengaged) and asked the teacher to select which style most represents their building administrative team’s discipline style most of the time. To not allow preconceived notions of the discipline style names, the discipline styles were labeled style 1, style 2, style 3 and style 4. This instrument was examined, scrutinized and evaluated by an expert in the field prior to implementation in this dissertation study.

The data source for a school’s state standardized test results was the Ohio Department of Education’s website. Specifically, the data was collected from the 2015-2016 Ohio School Report Card for each of the study’s participating schools. The 2015-2016 report card data was released for Ohio schools in the fall of 2016. This report card provided the school’s grade level passage percentage for each of the six tests included in the study’s calculation of the school’s state standardized test passage percentage. These tests included grade 6 English Language Arts, grade 6 math, grade 7 English Language Arts, grade 7 math, grade 8 English Language Arts, and grade 8 math. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) created the tests administered during the 2015-2016 school year. The AIR website states “AIR uses scientific sampling for field tests and advanced models for linking and equating to ensure stable test results. We customize our approach to the specific needs of each assessment program to obtain the best possible data and statistics” (AIR.org “Statistics and Psychometrics,” 2017). AIR’s research and development program monitors the AIR tests’ validity and reliability. Specifically for the state of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education published a guide called Understanding Ohio’s State Testing Reports 2015-2016. The guide states:

Test development is an extensive, ongoing process for ensuring that state tests are valid and appropriate measures of student knowledge and skills. Content advisory panel members first reviewed questions for this year’s test from a bank of test items field tested...
in other states by the American Institute of Research (AIR). During this review, committee members discussed whether each test item was accurate, suitable for the course and if it measures an aspect of the Ohio Learning Standards. From the resulting group of potential test items, the department and AIR built online and paper tests. Another group of educators serving on a standard-setting committee recommended performance levels or cut scores for five levels of tests results. The State Board of Education approved these recommendations. Additionally, the standard-setting committee prepared descriptions of what students should know and be able to do at each of the five performance levels. (p. 2)

As indicated above, due to the high stakes associated with standardized tests for schools, school districts, and the individual students who take them, both AIR and the Ohio Department of Education have spent time, money, and resources to ensure students are administered tests that are both valid and reliable.

The instrument used to measure the school climate was the Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques. This survey was administered to the teaching staff of each participating middle school in an online format. The survey consisted of 63 questions scored with a four-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree). The school climate calculation for each of the survey scales was completed following the instructions and recommendation of the survey’s creators. The Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques was found to be valid and reliable. According to Bear, Hearn, and Mantz (2012) the reliability of the survey’s School Climate scale had internal consistency coefficients ranging from .84 to .95 with a median
correlation coefficient of .88. The survey’s school climate scale was found to have high
reliability across position groups with a range of .94 to .97 with an overall alpha of .97 (Bear,
Hearn, and Mantz, 2012). The authors reported reliability scores for internal consistency ranging
from .76 to .92 for the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques scale (Bear,
Hearn, and Mantz, 2012).

Research Question 1

The first research question analyzed in this study was Is school discipline associated with
a difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores? Schools were grouped by the
independent variable of school discipline style. All schools where placed into one of two
groups. These groups consisted of authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline
style. Schools were grouped based on the teacher’s perception of the administrative team’s
discipline style. All schools not perceived as having an administrative team with an authoritative
discipline style were grouped in the non-authoritative discipline style group. Standardized test
score data consisted of the school’s grade level passage percentage for grade 6 English Language
Arts, grade 6 math, grade 7 English Language Arts, grade 7 math, grade 8 English Language
Arts, and grade 8 math. The mean was calculated for each school’s group of standardized tests
by using the school’s student passage percentage for each grade level and subject test. A t-test
was used to statistically analyze the data. Table 3 below is the t-table from the t-test analysis.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Style</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Fail to Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Authoritative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean of the authoritative group was 0.63 and the mean of the non-authoritative group was 0.62. Alpha was set to determine significance at 0.05. The p-value of this research question’s data equaled 0.83. Because the p-value of 0.83 is greater than 0.05, the researcher has determined to fail to reject the null. This determination indicates no statistical difference between the authoritative discipline style group and the non-authoritative discipline style group in regards to a discipline style’s impact on student passage percentage of state standardized tests.

To take the analysis further, the researcher conducted a Cohen’s d calculation to examine effect size. A Cohen’s d calculation can determine if enough evidence is present to validate the need for an additional study with a larger sample size. The standard deviation of the authoritative group was 0.11 and the standard deviation of the non-authoritative group was 0.20. The Cohen’s d calculation for this research question was 0.06. This Cohen’s d calculation indicates a very small effect size signifying the sample size did not impact the outcome of the t-test. This calculation implies no evidence or differences between the groups regarding student passage percentage of state standardized tests would occur if the study included a larger sample size. With the data from this study, the researcher concludes there is no difference between student passage percentages on state standardized test based on the school administrative team’s discipline style.

Research Question 2

The second research question analyzed in this study was What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive, and social emotional learning techniques scale). Schools were grouped by the independent variable of school discipline style. All schools were placed into an authoritative discipline style or non-authoritative discipline style group. Schools were grouped based on the
teacher’s perception of their administrative team’s discipline style. All schools not perceived as having an administrative team with an authoritative discipline style were grouped in the non-authoritative discipline style group. The teaching staff of each participating school was asked to complete an online school climate survey. The survey utilized in this study was the *Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques*. Each scale consisted of separate subscales. The subscales were used to determine standard scores for each scale. The use of both scales allowed the researcher to statistically analyze both the school climate scale and positive, punitive, and social emotional learning techniques scale.

The first analyzation of data for the second research question used the School Climate Scale. A *t*-test was used to statistically analyze the data of this scale. Table 4 below is the *t*-table from the *t*-test analysis.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Style</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>150.97</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>Fail to Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Authoritative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>144.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean of the authoritative group was 150.97 and the mean of the non-authoritative group was 144.48. Alpha was set to determine significance at 0.05. The p-value of this research question’s data equaled 0.10. Because the p-value of 0.10 is greater than 0.05, the researcher has determined to fail to reject the null. This determination indicates no statistical difference between the authoritative discipline style group and the non-authoritative discipline style group in regards to teacher perception of school climate (School Climate Scale).
To further the analysis of this school climate scale, the researcher conducted a Cohen’s $d$ calculation to examine effect size. A Cohen’s $d$ calculation can determine if enough evidence is present to validate the need for an additional study with a larger sample size. The standard deviation of the authoritative group was 5.82 and the standard deviation of the non-authoritative group was 10.02. The Cohen’s $d$ calculation for this research question was 0.79. This Cohen’s $d$ calculation indicates a very high end medium effect size signifying the sample size could have strongly impacted the outcome, and the study should be completed with a larger sample size. This effect size suggests a study with a larger sample size may indicate a difference between the two discipline styles on the School Climate Scale. It is important to note this Cohen’s $d$ calculation was 0.01 away from being classified as a large effect size grouping. This indicates strong evidence a larger study would show different results in other statistical tests such as the $t$-test.

With the result of the Cohen’s $d$ calculation indicating sample size may have impacted the statistical outcome, the researcher explored the survey’s School Climate Scale deeper. Examining the scale’s subscales, and comparing the two groups (authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline) difference in mean, subscales may be identified where differences might exist. Table 5 below compares the mean of each of the study’s groups by subscale for the School Climate Scale.
Table 5

Subscale Mean Differences of the School Climate Scale: authoritative schools vs. non-authoritative schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Authoritative School Mean</th>
<th>Non-Authoritative School Mean</th>
<th>Difference in Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Student Relations</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Teacher Relations</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Diversity</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement School-Wide</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of Expectations</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness of Rules</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Safety</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying School-Wide</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Home Communications</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Relations</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The School Climate Scale of the *Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques* has 10 subscales as shown in Table 5. Nine (9) of the 10 subscales indicate a positive mean for the authoritative discipline style group compared to the non-authoritative discipline style group. The lone subscale indicating a stronger area for the non-authoritative group was the Teacher-Student Relations subscale. The difference in mean is -0.02 in this subscale, which is a very minimal difference. The other nine subscales difference in mean ranged from 0.06 to 0.43. These positive numbers indicate more favorable responses from the teachers of the schools grouped in the authoritative discipline style group than the non-authoritative discipline style group. There were two subscales where a large difference in mean was detected. These subscales included Fairness of Rules and Teacher-Home Communication. The difference in mean scores between the two discipline style groups for the Fairness of Rules subscale and Teacher-Home Communication subscale was 0.25 and 0.43 respectively. The Fairness of Rules subscale
consisted of four survey questions the participants were asked to respond to using a four-point Likert scale. These four statement/questions included:

1. “The school rules are fair.”

2. “The consequences of breaking school rules are fair.”

3. “The school’s Code of Conduct is fair.”

4. “Classroom rules are fair.”

The Teacher-Home Communication subscale consisted of five survey questions the participants were asked to respond to using a four-point Likert scale. These five statements/questions included:

1. “Teachers listen to the concerns of parents.”

2. “Teachers do a good job of communicating with parents.”

3. “Teachers show respect toward parents.”

4. “Teachers work closely with parents to help students when they have problems.”

5. “Parents are informed about their child’s good behavior.”

While nine of the 10 subscale differences in means favored the authoritative discipline style, these two subscales substantially favored the authoritative discipline style on school climate from the teacher’s perspective. The researcher concludes these two specific areas where a noteworthy difference is shown, as well as the other seven subscales showing smaller but favorable data for the authoritative discipline style, indicates the authoritative discipline style has a more positive impact on the school climate of a middle school from a teacher’s perspective than the non-authoritative discipline style.
The second analysis of data for the second research question was on the positive, punitive, and social emotional learning techniques scale. A t-test was used to statistically analyze the data of this scale. Table 6 below is the t-table from the t-test analysis.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Style</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.84</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>Fail to Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Authoritative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean of the authoritative group was 43.84 and the mean of the non-authoritative group was 42.57. The p-value to determine significance was set at 0.05. The p-value of this research question’s data was 0.37. Because the p-value of 0.37 is greater than 0.05, the researcher has determined to fail to reject the null. This determination indicates no statistical difference between the authoritative discipline style group and the non-authoritative discipline style group in regards to teacher perception of school climate (Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale).

To further the analysis of this Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale, the researcher conducted a Cohen’s d calculation to examine effect size. A Cohen’s d calculation can determine if enough evidence is present to validate the need for an additional study with a larger sample size. The standard deviation of the authoritative group was 2.09 and the standard deviation of the non-authoritative group was 3.90. The Cohen’s d calculation for this research question was 0.41. This Cohen’s d calculation indicates a medium effect size signifying the sample size may have impacted the outcome. This effect size suggests a
study with a larger sample size could show a difference between the two discipline styles on the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale.

With the result of the Cohen’s $d$ calculation indicating sample size may have impacted the statistical outcome, the researcher explored the survey’s Use of Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale in more depth. Examining each scale’s subscales, and comparing the two groups (authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline) difference in mean, subscales may be identified where differences might exist. Table 7 below compares the mean of each of the study’s groups by subscale for the Use of Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale.

Table 7

### Subscale Mean Differences of the Use of Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale: authoritative schools vs. non-authoritative schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Authoritative School Mean</th>
<th>Non-Authoritative School Mean</th>
<th>Difference in Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of Positive Behavior Techniques</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Punitive Techniques</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of SEL Techniques</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Use of Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale of the Delaware School Climate Survey: Scales of School Climate and Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques has three subscales as shown in Table 7. All three subscales’ means are favorable towards the authoritative discipline style. The difference in mean for the three subscales ranges from 0.04 to 0.18. While these differences in means are not as wide of a disparity as the School Climate Scale’s subscales, all three subscales are positive for the authoritative discipline style. This information, coupled with the Cohen’s $d$ information ($d=0.41$) indicating a study with a larger sample size could show a difference between the two discipline styles on the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale, one
could infer a difference does exist between the authoritative discipline style and the non-authoritative discipline style on the impact of school climate from a teacher’s perspective.

Summary

This study examined differences between the school discipline styles of school administrative teams, as perceived by the building’s teachers, in the areas of middle school students’ standardized test scores and the effect on the teacher’s perception of school climate. For each research question, a statistical analysis was completed to determine if a difference was found between discipline styles. In addition to the statistical analysis, the researcher utilized descriptive statistics to further examine the data. The results demonstrated mixed outcomes.

The first research question was Is school discipline associated with a difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores? The researcher analyzed the data between the two discipline style groups, authoritative and non-authoritative, using a t-test and calculating the Cohen’s $d$. The results of the $t$-test did not indicate a statistical difference existed between discipline style groups and their influence on middle school students’ standardized test scores ($t=.83>P.05$). Calculating the Cohen’s $d$ ($d=0.06$) indicated a very small effect size signifying the study’s sample size did not influence the statistical outcome resulting in a failure to reject the null determination.

The second research question was What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive and social emotional learning techniques scale)? The research analyzed the School Climate Scale and the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale of the Delaware School Climate Survey. Both scales allowed the researcher to analyze the data between the two discipline style groups, authoritative and non-authoritative, using $t$-tests and calculating the
Cohen’s $d$. For the school climate scale, the $t$-test did not indicate a statistical difference existed between the discipline styles of the groups and the teacher’s perception of the school climate within the school building ($t=.10>P.05$). Calculating the Cohen’s $d$ ($d=0.79$) indicated a very high medium level effect size signifying the study’s sample size may have influenced the $t$-test outcome resulting in a failure to reject the null determination. This medium effect size, especially being on the high end of the medium scale, indicates a study with a larger sample size could result in a different statistical outcome. Analyzing the data from the School Climate Scale further, nine of the 10 subscales difference in means between the discipline style groups was very favorable for the authoritative discipline style over the non-authoritative discipline style. Two subscales stood out. The Fairness of Rules ($\mu=0.25$) and Teacher-Home Communication ($\mu=0.43$) subscales showed the largest difference in mean between the study groups. For the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale, the $t$-test did not indicate a statistical difference existed between discipline style groups and the teacher’s perception of the school climate within the school building ($t=.37>P.05$). The Cohen’s $d$ ($d=0.41$) calculation indicated a small effect size, suggesting the sample size had low impact on the $t$-test and the researcher failing to reject the null outcome. A larger sample size could result in a difference between the two discipline styles on the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale, but the likelihood would be low. However, when analyzing the subscale mean data for the Positive, Punitive, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale, all three subscales were favorable to the authoritative discipline style compared to the non-authoritative discipline style. When examining the Cohen’s $d$ calculations coupled with the fact that 12 of the 13 total subscales had a difference in mean favoring the authoritative discipline style over the non-authoritative discipline style, the researcher concludes there is a difference between the
discipline styles effect on school climate from the teacher’s perspective. This effect would indicate the authoritative discipline style would be favorable over a non-authoritative discipline style.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the study and propose recommendations for policy, practice, and future research opportunities on the topic of school discipline. The chapter begins with an overview highlighting the objectives of the research study and methodology used to complete the analysis. A summary of the results for each of the study’s two research questions is included along with a discussion on policy and practice recommendations from the findings. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research as it relates to school discipline and this study.

Review of the Study

Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010) state school climate is often a target area of school improvement initiatives because of the link between positive school climates and improved academic outcomes. Schools with positive climates tend to have fewer student discipline problems (Thapa et al., 2013). The main purpose of this study was to investigate if school discipline style had an impact on student academic outcomes, specifically on standardized test scores, and if school discipline style had an impact on school climate from the teachers’ perspective. With the importance of student achievement at an all time high, and a plethora of research on the importance of a positive school climate, this study explored the possibility one discipline style was more positive and impactful on student academic achievement and school climate than other discipline styles.

The framework of Diane Baumrind’s Parenting Theory was the structure utilized to categorize school discipline styles of school administrators. These discipline styles include authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful/disengaged (Baumrind, 1967, 1971). Baumrind’s Parenting Theory can be applied to the school setting, using the same discipline...
styles of parents to the discipline styles of both teachers and school administrators (Walker, 2009). Each of the four discipline styles are comprised of differing levels of demandingness and response or support by the disciplinarian. According to Gunnoe (2013) the authoritarian style consists of high demanding but low response level; the authoritative style consists of high demanding and high response level; the permissive style consists of low demanding but high response level; and the neglecting or disengaged style consists of low demanding and low response level.

All Ohio public middle schools were invited to participate in this school discipline style study. Certain characteristics of the middle school were required for a school to participate. These characteristics included a minimum of 200 total students in grades 6-8, the building must consist of grades 5-8 or grades 6-8 only, the school must be an Ohio public school, and the building principal must have served in the current administrative role for a minimum of 12 months. After sending a statewide email invitation, 22 middle schools accepted the offer. Of the 22 middle schools initially accepting the invitation, 21 middle schools participated in the study. A total of 239 teachers, or 38.93% of the teachers, who were employed at the 21 participating schools completed the teacher survey. An average of 11.38 teachers completed the survey from each participating school.

The study contained one independent variable, perceived administrator discipline style, and two dependent variables, student academic achievement and school climate. There were several data sources and instruments used to collect data for this study. They included an instrument to group schools by perceived administrative discipline style (categorical grouping), the Ohio Department of Education’s standardized test results (quantitative data), and a school climate instrument (quantitative data). This data was collected from the Ohio Department of
Education’s website (standardized test scores) and online surveys (perceived administrative discipline style and school climate instrument) administered to participating teachers.

Schools were grouped by the administrator’s discipline style as perceived by the school’s teaching staff. All schools perceived as having authoritative school discipline were placed into the authoritative school discipline group and all other schools were placed into the non-authoritative school discipline group. After the data was collected from the Ohio Department of Education’s website and from the online school climate survey, the data was analyzed to answer the study’s research questions. Both research questions were answered using a t-test, Cohen’s $d$ calculation, and descriptive statistics. The research questions were:

1. Is school discipline associated with a difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores?

2. What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive and social emotional learning techniques scale)?

**Discussion**

The lack of school discipline has been a concern for many years (Bear, 1998; Garegae, 2008; Nelson, 2002). The lack of school discipline is known by school stakeholders and is consistently a priority of school leaders; however, school leaders have been unable to solve the lack of school discipline in schools (Bear, 2010; Burns, 1985). While much time, effort, and money has been devoted to this topic, schools still struggle in the understanding of and improvement of school discipline (Bear, 1998; Burns, 1985; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Policy makers have worked towards solving the lack of school discipline as well. State lawmakers continue to introduce and pass laws at the state level in an attempt to address school
discipline (Fabelo, T., et al., 2011). Dickerson (2007) states each school district’s Board of Education has the authority to and must exercise their authority to create and implement board policy to reflect the type of discipline they deem fit for their school district. The research questions of this study were formulated to investigate if school discipline style had an impact on student academic outcomes, specifically on standardized test scores, and if school discipline style had an impact on school climate from the teachers’ perspective.

**Research Question 1.**

The first research question sought to answer the following: Is school discipline associated with a difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores? The data for this question was analyzed using a t-test and calculating the Cohen’s $d$. This study found no statistical difference ($t=.83>P.05$) in middle school students’ standardized test scores based on the perceived discipline style of the school’s administrative team. The calculation of the Cohen’s $d$ ($d=0.06$) indicated a very small effect size implying the sample size did not impact this $t$-test statistical analysis.

The findings of this study in respect to school discipline having an impact on student standardized test scores as explored in my first research question are not in agreement with previous research. Al-Safran, Brown, and Wiseman (2014) conducted a quantitative study exploring the effect of principal’s leadership style on student academic outcome, specifically the results of math and science standardized tests scores of 8th grade students. Their research results found significant difference in student standardized test results in relation to different principals’ leadership styles. While Al-Safran, Brown, and Wiseman’s (2014) study is similar to this study, the findings are opposite. There were some fundamental differences between Al-Safran, Brown, and Wiseman’s (2014) study and this study such as the difference in number of participating
schools (21 schools compared to 210 schools) and this study did not include students as survey participants.

Additionally, a study conducted by Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, and Feinberg (2005) explored how a whole-school positive behavior support program, similar to the authoritative discipline style, impacted kindergarten through 5th grade student standardized achievement scores. The study found after a whole-school positive behavior program was implemented, student standardized tests scores increased during each phase of the study. While these findings are contradictory to the results of this study, the methodology of the studies are different. Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, and Feinberg’s (2005) study was conducted at one school over a three-year period and included a pre-intervention phase, an intervention phase, and a follow-up phase to determine changes in students’ academic achievement. This continuum of monitoring is different than how this study examined student test scores once and categorized schools based on teacher perception of the administrator’s discipline style. In addition to the difference in the method of monitoring student academic achievement, the studies focus on different age groups of students.

Student academic achievement has been measured using different methods in research studies. Several previously completed research studies explored the connection between discipline styles and student academic outcomes utilizing a different measure of student success than student standardized test scores as used in this study. Numerous studies applied student grade point average (GPA) as the student academic measure when investigating whether school discipline had an impact on student academic success. The findings of the studies utilizing GPA as the student academic measure indicate the administrator’s style of discipline strongly impacts the academic outcome of students when measuring student GPA (Pasternak, 2013; Caldarella et
al., 2011; Brown-Richards, 2011; Fletcher, A. C., Steinberg, L., Darling, N. E., & Dornbusch, S. M., 1995; & Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2016). These previous research studies, while using different academic achievement measures, are not in agreement with the finding of this study. One reason a difference in student academic achievement may be shown when using GPA and not shown when using standardized test scores could be subjectivity versus objectivity. When teachers are grading assignments and assigning student grades, subjectivity can take place while standardized tests are scored without bias (Malouff, 2008).

Similarly, results of a study completed by Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, and Talib (2012) showed parenting discipline style had a strong relationship to student academic performance. While their study utilized parenting discipline style and this study incorporated school administrative discipline style, Walker (2009) argues Baumrind’s theoretical framework to discipline style can be applied to the school setting. Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, and Talib’s study showed a significant positive correlation between authoritative and permissive parenting to student academic achievement and a significant negative correlation between authoritative parenting and student academic achievement. Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, and Talib’s study outcome is again opposite the results found in this study where no significant difference was found between school discipline style and an impact on student academic achievement. Molnar (2012) argues that parenting influence has a greater impact on students then the school environment. While Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, and Talib’s (2012) study and this study both explore discipline style impact on student academic achievement, the difference in methodology (where the discipline influence originates) between the studies may be the reason for different outcomes.
Research Question 2.

The second research question sought to answer the following: What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive, and social emotional learning techniques scale)? The data for this question was analyzed using a t-test, calculating the Cohen’s $d$, and using descriptive statistics. The t-test for both scales (School Climate Scale and the Positive, Punitve, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale) of the Delaware School Climate Survey administered to the teaching staff of each participating school determined no statistical difference between the authoritative discipline style group and the non-authoritative discipline style group. The Cohen’s $d$ calculations (School Climate Scale $d=0.79$ and Positive, Punitve, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale $d=0.41$) however did indicate the effect size might have impacted the outcome of the statistical t-test calculations. The effect size for the School Climate Scale is a very high-end medium effect size, 0.01 from being considered a high effect size, and the Positive, Punitve, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale is a medium effect size. These effect sizes indicate a larger sample size could change the outcome of the statistical test between the two discipline style groups on school climate, specifically on the survey’s School Climate Scale. Examining the scales’ subscales, and comparing the two groups (authoritative discipline style and non-authoritative discipline) difference in mean, subscales were identified where differences existed. Nine (9) of the 10 subscales of the School Climate Scale were a positive mean for the authoritative discipline style group compared to the non-authoritative discipline style group, and all three of the subscales of the Positive, Punitve, and Social Emotional Learning Techniques Scale were a positive mean for the authoritative discipline style group compared to the non-authoritative discipline style group. Overall, 12 of the 13 subscales included in the survey’s
scales indicated a positive mean for the authoritative discipline style group. When considering all the data’s calculations, the researcher concluded there is a difference in discipline styles effect on school climate from the teacher’s perspective; the authoritative discipline style is a more positive discipline style when compared to the non-authoritative discipline styles on school climate from the teacher’s perspective.

The results of this study indicate a school where the administrative team demonstrates and establishes the authoritative discipline style, the school would have a more positive school climate, specifically from the teacher’s perspective. Schools that have a more positive school climate are more apt to have higher student academic achievement, higher graduation rates, and fewer student discipline issues (Voight, Austin, and Hanson, 2013). According to Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D’Alessandro, and Guffey (2012), a positive school climate is associated with and promotes safety, a higher level of engaged learners and teachers, and enhanced school improvement efforts. Because of the aforementioned reasons, it would behoove a school administrative team to employ the authoritative discipline style to improve the school climate.

The findings of this study coincide with previous research conducted investigating discipline style’s impact on school climate. The available research reports the discipline style effects the school climate from both student and teacher perspectives (Caldarella et al, 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2012). Past research, as well as this research, indicates authoritative discipline positively influences school climate.

Additionally, a study completed by Caldarella et al. (2011) indicated improvement in school climate, from the perspective of both students and teachers, when behavior interventions were used to address student discipline in the areas of structure and support. Both structure and support are strong indicators of the authoritative discipline style (Baumrind, 1966). The
outcomes of both Caldarella et al. (2011) and this study align; the authoritative discipline style is associated with more positive school climates.

Furthermore, in a study conducted by Gregory et al. (2010) when an administrative team’s school structure and support level are both high, authoritative discipline style, it was statistically associated with less student bullying and victimization. Both students and teachers reported this association in decreased bullying and victimization in the study. Bullying is a subscale of the School Climate Scale administered to the participants in this research study. Gregory et al. (2010) report fewer incidents of bullying with authoritative style discipline and this study reports authoritative discipline style is associated with more positive mean calculations for the School Climate Scale, including the subscale Bullying School-Wide.

Likewise, a recent study conducted by Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2012) concluded teachers’ perceptions of school safety and school climate were improved in a climate of high support and structure. Environments considered high in support and structure are considered authoritative school discipline style environments (Gunnoe, 2013). This study reports authoritative discipline style is associated with more positive mean calculations for the School Climate Scale, including the subscale School Safety. In addition to school safety, this research study found that in schools where authoritative discipline style existed, the overall school climate from the teacher’s perspective was more positive as well.

Conclusion

School leaders use many different strategies to address student discipline issues. Each school leader has his or her own discipline style influencing the student population in their school building (Burns, 1985). Gregory et al. (2010) states there is a wide disparity in school discipline practices. Nevertheless, the lack of school discipline and improving student behavior
must be addressed in our school systems. Reviewing the data in this research study, a study on the school discipline topic, has revealed outcomes inconsistent with previous research and outcomes consistent with previous research.

The findings of this study’s first research question, *Is school discipline associated with a difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores?*, did not resemble findings of previous research. This study found there was not a significant difference in middle school students’ standardized test score results based on differences in discipline styles of school leaders. The results of this study indicate either the researcher is onto something, or there are other factors at work impacting the outcome of the study’s first research question. There may have been some unintended circumstances that impacted the school’s most recent test scores used in this study such as changes in testing vendors, a push by parents to “opt out” students from participating in state standardized tests, and assessment administration options given to school districts (online versus paper-pencil), which will be addressed in the next section (Recommendations). Nevertheless, this study indicates no significant difference in middle school students’ standardized test scores based on differences in school leaders discipline styles.

The findings of this study’s second research question, *What effect does school discipline style have on teacher perception of school climate (the school climate scale and the positive, punitive, and social emotional learning techniques scale)?*, did resemble findings of past research. This study found there is a difference in school climate from the teacher’s perspective based on the discipline style of the school’s administrative team. The authoritative discipline style is a more positive discipline style when compared to the non-authoritative discipline styles on school climate from the teacher’s perspective.
Recommendations

The knowledge gained from this research study allowed the researcher to formulate recommendations. The first research question explored whether school discipline is associated with a difference in students’ standardized tests scores. The results of this study indicate school discipline does not impact how students perform on standardized tests; this outcome is different from past research. However, there may be a few reasons why this study found different results than previous research. The student standardized test scores used in this study to gauge academic success were unique in multiple ways. The standardized assessments were new, a new phenomenon to “opt out” of testing took place, and the methods to administer these assessments were varied. Any, or all, of these factors may have impacted the standardized test results.

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Ohio Department of Education implemented tests created exclusively by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This was the first year AIR tests were used for the English Language Arts and math tests in the state of Ohio. The previous year’s English Language Arts and math tests administered in the state were created by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Prior to the one year of PARCC testing, the Ohio Department of Education administered the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA) to students in grades 3 through 8 for many years. With the changes in state assessments, and when a decrease in state test scores occurred statewide, interim state superintendent Lonny Rivera stated “We’ve long expected that grades might decline as we began to raise the bar for our students and schools. We believe both teachers and students will take steps to adjust to the new standards and tests” (Kovac, 2016). The fluctuations in Ohio’s tests may have impacted this study’s ability to accurately compare schools’ state standardized test results.
With the new tests came scrutiny and displeasure from parents. In the state of Ohio during the 2014-2015 and the 2015-2016 school years, many parents “opted out” their children from participating in the state standardized tests (O’Leary, 2016). O’Leary (2016) states the impact of these “opted out” students is unclear on school’s test results. The researcher did not have the ability to determine how “opted out” students impacted the individual school’s passage percentage on the standardized tests in this study.

The chaos associated with Ohio’s recent state of standardized testing, and the potential impact on student scores as discussed above, leads to a policy recommendation from the researcher on state standardized testing. These testing changes are a result of political entities, both at the state and federal level. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires states to implement the Common Core State Standards, test students in English Language Arts and math, and requires the assessments students take to align to the Common Core State Standards (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). NCLB allows individual states to determine and align state assessments to the state-adopted standards. The testing chaos from the political entities, both the national government and the state of Ohio, has impacted local school districts, and ultimately students. A policy recommendation to the policy makers, both at the national and state level, is to make changes at a slower pace. The rapid change caused confusion and animosity amongst school districts, teachers, parents, and students.

In addition to the changes in vendors for Ohio student assessments and the parent “opt out” movement, for the first time tests were available to be administered online to Ohio students. During the 2015-2016 school year, school districts had the option to take the assessments using either computer based or the traditional paper-pencil style of tests. According to Herold (2016) students who completed the testing online scored much lower than their counterparts who
completed the tests with the traditional paper-pencil method. The data used for this research question was gathered from the Ohio Department of Education’s website, which did not indicate the assessment administration option chosen by the school.

During the 2015-2016 school year, districts had an option to administer the test online or the traditional paper-pencil method. During the 2016-2017 school year, the Ohio Department of Education (n.d.) has moved all standardized testing to online, unless a district waiver has been received. A policy recommendation to the Ohio Department of Education is to require all schools to administer the test in the same manner from the beginning of implementing the change. While the online format will now be standard for most school districts, other testing changes may be directed by the Ohio Department of Education, and the Department may allow districts to phase in the change. This researcher recommends this is bad policy.

The results of this study indicate middle schools whose administrative team is perceived by the teaching staff to utilize the authoritative school discipline style have a more positive school climate, as perceived by the building’s teaching staff. Additionally, prior research has indicated schools with a more positive school climate have higher student academic achievement, decreased discipline issues, higher graduation rates (Voight, Austin, and Hanson, 2013) promote a safer school environment, have a higher level of engaged learners and teachers, and enhanced school improvement efforts (Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D’Alessandro, & Guffey, 2012). The researcher recommends school administrative teams employ an authoritative discipline style. In addition, the researcher recommends district level administrators search for building level administrators whose discipline style would follow the high structure, high support model of the authoritative discipline style when looking to employ new building level
administrators. In doing so, based on the results of this study, the school climate of the school building would be a more positive school climate.

**Future Research Opportunities**

After evaluation of this research, it was determined there are several aspects of the study that could lead to future research opportunities. The most obvious characteristic to the researcher was the idea of duplicating the study with a much larger sample. When the data was analyzed, a Cohen’s $d$ calculation was completed. This calculation indicated a medium effect size, specifically for the second research question. A medium effect size indicates a larger sample size may result in a different statistical outcome. Using the same constructs of this study, but increasing the sample size could provide a future project providing additional data for each of the research questions.

Additionally, another aspect of this study leading to future research opportunities is to explore a connection between the dependent variables, school climate and students’ standardized test scores. This study did not examine the two dependent variables in conjunction to one another. Past research has studied these variables with mixed outcomes. Voight, Austin, and Hanson (2013) explored the connection between school climate and results of students’ standardized test scores, specifically English Language Arts and math (the same tested subjects this study examined). The finding of their study showed that a positive school climate positively impacts student success on state standardized assessments. Macneil, Prater, and Busch (2009) conducted a study investigating connections between school climate and student success on state standardized assessments in the state of Texas. Their findings indicated a connection between a positive school climate and higher school success rates on standardized tests in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. A study conducted by Nichols and Nichols (2012)
found the opposite. Nichols and Nichols found perception of school climate by a school’s student body, as well as the student’s parents, was independent of the school’s academic outcome. Both high performing schools and low performing schools, based on state standardized tests, had the ability to have a positive school climate.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct this study with the same constructs after the state of standardized testing in Ohio has become more stabilized and consistent. As stated above, while this study did not compare the two dependent variables of school climate and student academic performance, a fascinating connection could be made. The research of Voight, Austin, and Hanson (2013) and Macneil, Prater, and Busch (2009) showed a connection between school climate and student academic performance. This current study found school administrator’s discipline style did influence school climate from the teachers’ perception but did not find school administrator’s discipline style influenced middle school students’ standardized test scores. However, if an administrator’s discipline style did influence school climate and according to Voight, Austin, and Hanson (2013) and Macneil, Prater, and Busch (2009) school climate does influence student academic success, one would believe an administrator’s discipline style would influence student academic success. While this conclusion cannot be made from the results of this study, it lends some merit to the idea that the extenuating circumstances with the standardized testing in Ohio during the period of this research influenced the students’ success on the standardized test. However, when reflecting on the research of Nichols and Nichols (2012), where no significant difference was found between student academic outcomes and perception of school climate, maybe the impact of the changes in state standardized testing did not influence the results of this research. An additional study during a more stabilized testing
environment could provide further insight to a possible connection between school climate, students’ performance on standardized tests, and school discipline styles.
REFERENCES


*Genetic Psychology Monographs, 4*, 1-103.


developmental characteristics. Retrieved 12/3/2014, from
http://www.nmsa.org/Research/

research on principal influence to inform performance evaluation design. (A Quality
Retrieved from
http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/1707_The_Ripple_Effect_d8_Online_0.pdf

policy, practice, and teacher education. Teacher College Record, 111(1), 180-213.

Cornell, D., Shukla, K., & Konold, T. R. (2016). Authoritative school climate and student
academic engagement, grades, and aspirations in middle and high schools. AERA Open,
2(2), 1-18.


Dehyadegary, E., Yaacob, S., Juhari, R., & Talib, M. (2012). Relationship between parenting
style and academic achievement among Iranian adolescents in Sirjan. Canadian Center
of Science and Education, 8(1), 156-160.


Breaking schools’ rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students’


Institutional Review Board

Date: June 24, 2016
To: Rahman Dyer
CC: Ted Haselman
RE: Does Style of School Discipline Make a Difference?

Project Expiration date: June 24, 2017

The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board (IRB) has completed its review of your project utilizing human subjects and has granted authorization. This study has been approved for a period of one year only. The project has been assigned the number 1027.

In order to comply with UF policy and federal regulations, human subject research must be reviewed by the IRB on at least a yearly basis. If you have not completed your research within the year, it is the investigator’s responsibility to ensure that the Progress Report is completed and sent to the IRB in a timely fashion. The IRB needs to process the re-approval before the expiration date, which is printed above.

Understand that any proposed changes may not be implemented before IRB approval, in which case you must complete an Amendment/Modification Report.

Following the completion of the use of human subjects, the primary investigator must complete a Certificate of Compliance form indicating when and how many subjects were recruited for the study.

Please refer to the IRB guidelines for additional information. This packet can be obtained within blackboard under community section. Please note that if any changes are made to the present study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please include that number on any other documentation or correspondence regarding the study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact IRB at (419) 434-4640 or email irb@findlay.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fennema-Bloom, Ed.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Cc: IRB Office
APPENDIX B

Email to be sent to the building principals:

Hello:

My name is Ted Haselman and I am a doctoral student at The University of Findlay. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the different discipline styles of middle school administrators. The study will examine the impact these discipline styles have on both the school climate and student academic achievement of the middle school building.

By better understanding how school discipline styles impact student academic achievement as well as school culture, we as executive-level school leaders can develop in our building-level school administrators the necessary skills and knowledge to maximize desired organizational outcomes. These outcomes include, but are not limited to, higher student performance as well as positive and productive environments in which all stakeholders in the school community, teachers, administrators, and students, can excel and maximize their potential.

I am contacting you to ask for your consideration to be a part of this important study.

The study consists of an online teacher survey. The survey will be used to determine the building administrator’s discipline style from the perspective of the teachers and gauge the school climate of the building. The survey consists of 64 questions and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

If you allow your school building to be a part of the study, the only role you would have would be to distribute the online survey information to your teaching staff.

To participate in this study, your school building must meet the following conditions:

- The building must consist of grades 5-8 or grades 6-8 only.
- The school must be an Ohio public school.
- The school must have a minimum of 200 total students in grades 6-8.
- The building principal (yourself) must have served in the current administrative position for a minimum of 12 months.

If you are willing to allow your building to be a part of this study, please communicate with me via email or phone so that I may coordinate the effort within any guidelines required by your district.

This survey and consent waiver have been approved by The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board, which guarantees that research involving human subjects follows federal regulations. The IRB chair can be reached at irb@findlay.edu. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. If you have additional questions, you may also contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Rahman Dyer at 419-434-6901 or via email at dyer@findlay.edu

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Ted Haselman
University of Findlay Doctoral Student
419-265-9765 (Cell) 419-822-3391 ex. 5102 (Office)
Email to be sent to the district Superintendents:

Hello fellow Superintendents:

My name is Ted Haselman and I am the Superintendent at Pike-Delta-York Local School District in Delta, Ohio. I am also a doctoral student at The University of Findlay. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the different discipline styles of middle school administrators. The study will examine the impact these discipline styles have on both the school climate and student academic achievement of the middle school building.

By better understanding how school discipline styles impacts student academic achievement as well as school culture, we as executive-level school leaders can develop in our building-level school administrators the necessary skills and knowledge to maximize desired organizational outcomes. These outcomes include, but are not limited to, higher student performance as well as positive and productive environments in which all stakeholders in the school community, teachers, administrators, and students, can excel and maximize their potential.

I am contacting you to ask for your consideration of your district’s middle school(s) to be a part of this important study.

The study consists of an online teacher survey. The survey will be used to determine the building administrator’s discipline style from the perspective of the teachers and gauge the school climate of the building. The survey consists of 64 questions and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

If you allow your middle school building to be a part of the study, the only role your building administrator would have would be to distribute the online survey information to the teaching staff.

To participate in this study, the middle school building must meet the following conditions:

- The building must consist of grades 5-8 or grades 6-8 only.
- The school must be an Ohio public school.
- The school must have a minimum of 200 total students in grades 6-8.
- The building principal must have served in the current administrative position for a minimum of 12 months.

If you are willing to allow your middle school building to be a part of this study, please communicate with me via email or phone so that I may coordinate the effort within any guidelines required by your district.

This survey and consent waiver have been approved by The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board, which guarantees that research involving human subjects follows federal regulations. The IRB chair can be reached at irb@findlay.edu. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. If you have any additional questions at a later time, you may also contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Rahman Dyer at 419-434-6901 or via email at dyer@findlay.edu

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Ted Haselman
University of Findlay Doctoral Student
419-265-9765 (Cell)
419-822-3391 ex. 5102 (Office)
Email to be sent to the building teachers:

Hello:

My name is Ted Haselman and I am a doctoral student at The University of Findlay. As part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting research on the different discipline styles of middle school administrators. The study will examine the impact these discipline styles have on both the school climate and student academic achievement of the middle school building.

By better understanding how school discipline styles impacts student academic achievement as well as school culture, school leaders can develop the necessary skills and knowledge to maximize desired organizational outcomes. These outcomes include, but are not limited to, higher student performance as well as positive and productive environments in which all stakeholders in the school community, teachers, administrators, and students, can excel and maximize their potential.

This study will allow individual participants to reflect on the current status of their school and their school leadership as it relates to style of discipline. As professional educators, participants will benefit from considering how school discipline style might impact student and school culture outcomes.

Your building principal has agreed for your school to participate in this study. I am contacting you to ask for your participation in this important study. Participation is voluntary and at any time you may withdraw from the study without penalty. By completing the survey, implied consent is given. The survey is anonymous and the risk is less than minimal. There is no compensation to participate in this study.

The study consists of an online teacher survey. The survey will be used to determine the building administrator’s discipline style from the perspective of the teachers and gauge the school climate of the building. The survey consists of 64 questions and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

This survey and consent waiver have been approved by The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board, which guarantees that research involving human subjects follows federal regulations. The IRB chair can be reached at irb@findlay.edu. You will be made aware of any information that varies from what has been provided to you and/or might affect your willingness to continue to participate in the project.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. If you have additional questions, you may also contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Rahman Dyer at 419-434-6901 or via email at dyer@findlay.edu

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request. To participate in the study, please select the following link to begin the survey: Link to online survey

Sincerely,

Ted Haselman
University of Findlay Doctoral Student
419-265-9765 (Cell)
419-822-3391 ex. 5102 (Office)