The Influence of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) on School Climate

Submitted by

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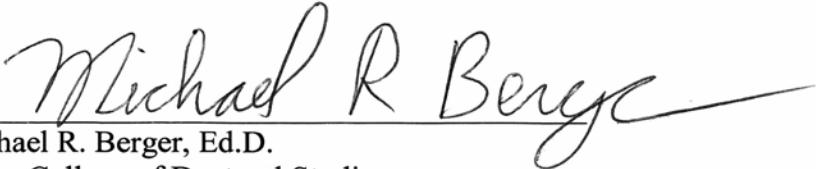
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Abstract

Many schools have used schoolwide behavior management programs such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) effectively as a behavior management system to improve student classroom behavior issues. The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions on school climate within a participant school located in Southern Arizona. Through naturalistic inquiry using face-to-face semi structured interviews, seven teachers who have taught on the participant high school campus for four to six years were able to share their personal perceptions regarding PBIS and its influence on their school climate. The data collected for this study included a PBIS teacher questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and three years of longitudinal student referral data to examine teacher perceptions of school climates and if the schoolwide behavior programs they implement has had any influence. This study identified possible limitations and advantages of PBIS on student behavior and determined whether perception from the study teachers differed from the general teaching staff regarding the influence PBIS has on school climate perceptions. The findings and conclusions of the study demonstrate that a relationship does indeed exist between having a successful behavior managements system in place such as PBIS and teachers' feelings about their school climate. Themes were developed and identified that may help administrators understand the relationships that may exist.

Keywords: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, PBIS, teacher efficacy, school climate.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Shelly, and my three children, Brittany, Trevor, and Jennafer. Their sacrifices throughout the last three and a half years of this journey have allowed me to grow personally, professionally, and spiritually in the pursuit of this lifelong dream. I would also like to dedicate this accomplishment to my parents, Charles and Jacque Bebee, for always believing in me and inspiring me to be the best that I could be in the game of life. Thank you. I love you all very much.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

      Managing student behavior at school is a task that all teachers and administrators share on a daily basis. As issues surrounding student behavior evolve, schools and school districts have turned to schoolwide behavior programs as a means to deal with student behavior that is less than desirable in the classroom. In regards to student discipline, schools have historically focused on creating safe environments that promote student learning and a place where learning is of highest priority (Gunbayi, 2007). In an effort to create a learning environment by combining learning with student safety, schools have turned to schoolwide behavior programs and student reward models that promote a more positive school environment for students. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) found that every educational environment establishes a climate that makes it unique from other schools or organizations. The act of blending the way that students behave in a school environment and the way that teachers interact with those students is what defines the school climate. In schools, having a positive climate creates the necessary link between a school's operational structure and teacher attitudes and behaviors (Gunbayi, 2007).

      This qualitative, interpretive study focused on high school teachers' perceptions of their school climate in relation to student behavior and academic success that has been attributable through the implementation of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program at a high school in Southern Arizona. Osterman (2000) highlighted dimensions of student-teacher relations, peer relations, and involvement in school activities as the key to social experiences that tie adolescents to their schools in ways that enhance motivation and achievement, and demonstrated how various

researchers have defined the impact on student success. While this research demonstrates schoolwide behavioral programs may benefit students academically, socially, and emotionally, it does not define how these programs benefit the teachers themselves. George and Bishop (1971) found that the formal characteristics such as teacher buy-in and student discipline that defines schools had a very important influence on how teachers themselves perceived their climate. This research adds to the larger body of research on how teachers feel about their school climate. Additionally, this study attempted to determine whether having a schoolwide behavioral program has any influence on teachers' perceptions of their school climate. Guiding research questions were utilized to gather information that has been provided by a sample of teachers from one single high school in Southern Arizona. The PBIS model is an application of behaviorally based systems that addresses school and classroom discipline problems. PBIS develops schoolwide programs that support staff in teaching and promoting positive behavior in all students. In an effort to help all students connect to their school, the use of PBIS can help students feel connected to their school, improve their self-esteem, and support academic success.

High school students have challenges they face every day they attend school. Likewise, teachers also have a pressure that has been forced on them to increase the academic success of students at their school. Just as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) had set the goal of 100% proficiency for students by 2014, the goal of the implementation of PBIS is to achieve 100% satisfaction with the educational practices and perceptions of a positive school climate by students and teachers alike. School climate represents a combination of variables and strategies that exist somewhere between the perceived

structure of an organization and the other characteristics of leaders as perceived by teachers regarding job satisfaction (Gunbayi, 2007). When students are academically successful and their behavior is compliant, it would seem that teachers would be more content with their work environment. What makes this study unique is that while PBIS has been successfully implemented and reported to have a positive impact on student behavior and academic success, it is not known how PBIS influences teachers' perceptions about their school climate. It is also not known whether there are other contributing factors that influence how teachers feel about the environment in which they work (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

This qualitative interpretive study focused on high school teacher perceptions of school climate in relation to student behavior and the academic success that has been attributable through the implementation of a PBIS program at a single high school in Southern Arizona. The PBIS program and student referral data has been in place for the past six years on this high school campus. The goal of this study was to explore teacher perceptions of the PBIS program and to determine if all teachers feel the student management system that has been implemented influences teachers' perceptions about their school climate. Through a PBIS teacher questionnaire, semi-structured teacher interviews, and three years of longitudinal student referral data, the goal of this study was to identify which factors of the school environment may lead to positive teacher perceptions. This study attempted to determine if positive teacher perceptions of their school climate were directly related to the implementation and longevity of PBIS at a mid-level socioeconomic high school campus. Semi-structured interviews about school

climate, as well as PBIS teacher questionnaire and student referral data, were used to collect data and answer the research question.

The results from this study will benefit school principals and school leaders who are considering implementation of a schoolwide behavioral plan on their campuses. Understanding the benefits that may exist for teachers themselves from implementation of PBIS will benefit school faculties as a whole. This chapter will further explain the background behind PBIS, introduce the problem statement and purpose of the study, describe the methodology chosen for this study, define the guiding questions, describe the nature of the study, outline the definition of terms, and describe the limitations for the study.

Background of the Study

With the latest school tragedies and the most recent school shootings, it is not possible to focus just on teaching and learning at any school today. It is every educator's professional obligation to keep students safe and to make school safety a priority. The idea of harm coming to a child at school is fundamentally unacceptable; however, school safety is an essential component of school climate (Bosworth, Ford, & Hernandez, 2011). High school students' academic success and their sense of belonging or connectivity to their school have been associated with high school students' perceptions of danger versus safety at school (Bosworth et al., 2011). While school safety and the ability to feel safe at school is still a problem that high schools and their students have to contend with students' sense of belonging and their ability to be academically successful in high school is something that cannot be ignored.

Since 2001, America's public education school system has been regulated by federal mandates and the results of these mandates will be evaluated at the conclusion of 2014. The NCLB Act of 2001 focused its attention on meeting the needs of all students regardless of socioeconomic status (NCLB, 2002). The focus of the NCLB Act is to ensure that all students meet or exceed reading and mathematics state standards with 100% proficiency by the conclusion of the 2014 academic school year. According to Forte (2010), under the NCLB Act schools are identified for improvement via application of an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) algorithm that is tightly defined in the NCLB legislation and ensuing regulations. With a focus on Annual Yearly Progress and a performance based accountability system, the challenge public education faces with increased accountability is being met with mixed reactions across the country.

The NCLB Act of 2001 has challenged administrators to be more accountable for students' education by employing highly qualified teachers using only research based instructional practices (NCLB, 2002). When asked to reflect on their high school experience, most teenagers typically report that interpersonal relationships are a vital part of their school engagement (Coleman, 1961). Because students need to feel like they belong, their motivation and academic success hinges on their social lives (Coleman, 1961). PBIS creates the bond that students have with their school and allow them to connect and enjoy their high school experience (Oswald, Safran, & Johanson, 2005).

In an effort to meet the demands of high stakes testing, while ensuring that every student receives the quality of education they deserve, schools and school districts have turned to schoolwide behavioral plans that outline expectations for their students. In an effort to address student behavior issues that can interfere with the learning process,

many schools have become interested in or are using to promote a positive and safe school environment for students (Warren et al., 2006). According to Scott, Alter, Rosenberg, and Borgmeier (2010), the strength of having PBIS is its flexibility that includes a wide range of behavior interventions that best suit the needs of individual students. With the onset of academic pressure it is imperative that not only do teachers differentiate learning for students, but also that they differentiate how to change undesirable student behaviors.

Classroom management is a skill set that is crucial to academic success and one that most teachers learn over time. A teacher's ability to control student behavior and engage them in the lessons that are being taught can be challenging. Many teachers are able to accomplish this through instinctual reactions while others turn to research-based strategies that have a background of being successful in the classroom. The PBIS model is a positive approach for changing undesirable behavior through the use of a positive reinforcement system to minimize individual problem behaviors, improve the quality of education, and also increase the likelihood for academic success (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Recent high stakes testing and federal mandates for student achievement are on the rise and the pressure to achieve academically affects both students and teachers alike. The stress to succeed academically has been linked to undesirable behaviors by students in the classroom that can distract entire classrooms (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

The educational environment in which students learn and teachers teach are greatly affected by the way students behave in the classroom. According to Scott et al. (2010), Positive Behavior Supports is not a curriculum or a program of prescribed strategies or interventions. Instead, PBIS is a conceptualized framework that outlines

systems of predictable problems and provides logical strategies to improve behavior

through the use of data to evaluate the success of the interventions (Scott et al., 2010).

Behavior interventions for students are defined as those strategies used by teachers such

at verbal cues or proximity to eliminate undesirable behavior and to reward positive

behaviors that a student exhibits. When schoolwide behavioral plans are used

successfully to improve student behaviors, then the quality of education improves for

students and teachers alike. School climate is defined as the quality of relationships that

exist between individuals at a school, the teaching and learning processes that take place,

and the collaborative efforts that exist between teachers and administrative staff members

(Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). In this interpretive study, key components that can

influence school climate that also align with the PBIS initiative are identified as follows:

student academic success; teacher/staff buy-in to the schools vision and mission; personal

benefits for teachers themselves from working at a particular school; and the way staff

members personally view the culture of the school.

Creating a positive school climate can take time and can be something that is very

difficult to obtain. Many school leaders have spent countless hours trying to improve

school climates while working through factors that may be beyond their control. In most

schools, the simple fact that there are so many different people who work on a school

campus can make it difficult to find harmony. Pressure from both state and federal

mandates can make the role of being a teacher very daunting. Those challenges present

many different facets that must be overcome as well as practices that must all be

perfected over time. Teachers must be able to plan curriculum, teach that curriculum,

create assignments, and evaluate the overall performance of each individual student

(Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Kasnitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdway (2009) stated that creating and being able to sustain a positive school climate is not possible unless schools have intentional structures in place to sustain it. Maslowski (2001) stated that culture is defined as the assumptions, norms, values, and cultural artifacts that are shared by a group. The everyday interactions of students and staff that occur naturally on a school campus make up and define the climate and culture that exists at a school. The personal perceptions of both students and teachers to the relationships that exist and the respect for the viewpoints of each group make up the culture that comes to be.

There is a growing body of research that demonstrates that schoolwide positive behavior and supports (SWPBS) reduce behavioral problems and help students improve their academic success (Eber, Hyde, & Suter, 2011). Improved student behavior in the classroom can be linked to students' perceptions of school climate in a very positive way (Kasnitz et al., 2009). Through data collection and analysis of student behavior issues, a school is able to monitor its efforts as schoolwide behavior plans are initiated and sustained over time. Even though the collection of behavior data is a common practice of schools across the country, what has not been researched or discussed in the literature is whether having schoolwide positive behavior and supports in place has any influence in how teachers feel about their school climate. According to Locke (1969), job satisfaction can be defined as the sense of fulfillment or gratification from working in an occupation or place. The way that teachers feel about their school climate is directly linked to job satisfaction. When teachers feel valued and empowered to do the job they are hired to do, it can be perceived that their perceptions about their job or job satisfaction will be directly reflected.

Educational research exists that suggests that the better students behave in class, the more teachers can teach without interruption (Kasnitz et al., 2009). Research also exists that supports the idea that when students behave, teachers are generally very satisfied with their job because they can optimize their ability to teach (Collie et al., 2012; Butt et al., 2005; Crossman & Harris, 2006; Dinham & Scott, 1998; Kim & Loadman, 1994). When examining school climate and its contributing factors, it may be perceived that student behavior and teacher efficacy may go hand in hand. Where very little research exists or is not discussed in literature is whether or not having schoolwide positive behavior and supports in place has any influence at all on how teachers feel about their school climate. It was the goal of this study to explore this concern. This study attempted to find out if having a schoolwide student behavior plan in place has any influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate.

Problem Statement

It is not known how PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate. This qualitative interpretive study focused on teacher perceptions of their school climate and sought to understand whether the implementation of PBIS has any influence on those perceptions at a public high school in Southern Arizona. Since there are many factors that may contribute to school climate and influence teachers' perceptions and perceived satisfaction with their environment, specific questions regarding school climate and PBIS were used.

The NCLB Act of 2001 focused its attention on meeting the needs of all students regardless of socioeconomic status (NCLB, 2002). With the NCLB mandate coming to fruition by 2014 and the implementation of new federally regulated standards there is

more pressure on students and teachers alike to meet with success. Since added pressure

has been put on teachers to assist their students to achieve high academic success, it has

been even more important that teachers be able to control student behavior in the

classroom. In the educational world of high stakes testing and student achievement data,

teachers must be able to produce high academic achievement scores for all students and

students must pass those exams in order to graduate from high school. This added

pressure on students has caused many students to act out and has damaged the student-

teacher relationship that once existed (Lunenburg, 2010). Students and their parents

blame teachers when students are not successful on these tests. When students are

challenged academically, they turn to cheating or they are disruptive in class to deflect

attention away from their shortcomings. Highly successful teachers must be able to

anticipate student problems and manage the behavior of all students in the classroom so

that learning can take place. Classroom teachers are forced to deal with undesirable

student behaviors that occur on a regular basis as part of their job. Those interactions and

individual successes that teachers have had in their classrooms has been the focus of

schoolwide behavior initiatives that have been explored by many schools.

PBIS has been successful in helping teachers achieve the NCLB's expected

academic results through a positive means of dealing with undesirable student behaviors

(Coffey & Horner, 2012). In order for students to overcome the educational challenges

they face, teachers must be able to create an environment free from distractions that

would interfere with their ability to teach. Teachers, in order to provide the quality of

education that they are expected to provide, must feel supported and have a positive

outlook about the environment that has been established (Hoyle, Marshall, & Yell, 2011).

Since teacher effectiveness and student behavior have a direct impact on learning, this qualitative interpretive study attempted to determine whether having schoolwide PBIS in place has any influence on teachers' perceptions about their school climate. Understanding the relationship that a schoolwide behavior plan has on improving undesirable student behaviors and the influence that may exist for teachers themselves must be studied within this context. Teachers who have a positive perception of their school climate are more likely to provide a quality education for their students (Scott et al., 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions on school climate within a participant school located in Southern Arizona. At this stage, the research focused on two phenomena, the PBIS student behavior management system and teacher self-perceptions of their school climate. PBIS were defined as an evidenced-based framework for school improvement based on a structured problem-solving model. Teacher perceptions of school climate were defined as the related factors of attitude, feeling, and behavior of individuals within the school system at a particular school (Hernández & Seem, 2004).

School safety, common expectations for students, improved student behaviors, and student academic improvement are all known outcomes from implementing PBIS (Eber et al., 2010). How PBIS and its known outcomes influence teacher perceptions of school climate was the focus of this research. Teacher's sense of job satisfaction has been associated with their motivation to teach, their sense of wellbeing in the work place, and their commitment to education in general (Collie et al., 2012). According to Sergiovanni

(2004), every educational organization has a climate that will distinguish it from other educational institutions and influence behavior and perceptions of teachers and students at that educational organization. A large part of how satisfied teachers are with their job is the impact that the students they teach have on those perceptions. PBIS are designed to give teachers a more positive approach to interacting with students in their classroom. The relationships that exist between teachers and students in the classroom can be linked directly to teacher job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012).

Through a qualitative interpretive study at a single high school in Southern Arizona, teachers were asked five demographic questions to assist the researcher in the purposeful selection of teachers to be interviewed. Those demographical questions were used to identify teachers who have taught at the school for at least four to six years. The sample group of teachers used for this study were purposefully selected to participate in a semi-structured interview. Seven teachers who have taught for at least four to six consecutive years post PBIS implementation were the target group whose feelings and perceptions about their school climate were explored.

Teachers' knowledge of the PBIS program and their personal feeling about the program was also explored through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions regarding PBIS that allowed teachers to elaborate on their thoughts about the PBIS program and their school climate. Factors such as student academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits, and school culture that may contribute to teachers' perceptions of success or failure of the program were explored through an interpretive study to determine if PBIS has any influence on teachers' perceptions. Three years of longitudinal student referral data that had been tracked and analyzed annually by the school

administration was obtained and further analyzed to demonstrate that PBIS has been effectively implemented through the continuous reduction of student discipline referrals since the program's inception. The data collected from the PBIS teacher questionnaire and teacher responses from the semi-structured interviews were used and analyzed as a part of this study. The results of this research, through collection of data, development of themes, and data analysis contribute to the field of education by providing an understanding of perceptions, which could contribute to teacher retention leading to improved student academic success for schools and school leaders.

School climate has such a significant impact on both students and teachers alike (Sergiovanni, 2004). Due to the delicate relationship that must exist between teacher and student, it is very important that teachers who provide the educational environment for students get to know their students personally. The relationships that are built through teacher/student interactions may also influence whether or not teachers feel positively about their school climate. Climate has been defined as the perceived effects of the formal system and other important environmental factors that may influence the attitudes, values, or beliefs of people who work for an organization (Gunbayi, 2007). Perceptions of both students and teachers become the reality of the school environment that actually exists and can drive student behavioral plans to be at the forefront of the planning and preparation for teachers.

In most schools, relationships and rapport are the necessary link between the organizational structures and the teacher perceptions that exist regarding school climate (Gunbayi, 2007). The characteristics of a school are very much influenced by the behavior of students as well as teachers' job satisfaction that influences the school

climate. School climate is representative of the mediating variables of job satisfaction and teacher efficacy that are intertwined between organizational structure and teacher performance that lend themselves to feelings of satisfaction (Gunbayi, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2004). Teachers' ability to effectively educate students in the classroom depends greatly on their ability to manage students in the classroom. Since PBIS provides consistent expectations for students, students are generally able to meet the expectations set before them. When students are well behaved and are happy with school, then teachers are able to deliver quality education and are generally much happier. While this study sought to understand teacher's individual perceptions of school climate and their feelings about the PBIS program itself, studying how a schoolwide behavior plan influences teachers' perceptions will add significant knowledge to the field.

Research Question and Phenomena

The phenomenon being studied is PBIS and its influence on teacher perceptions of school climate on a high school campus. While PBIS are designed to influence students in a positive way, it is not known if there is any relationship between PBIS and teacher perceptions of the school climate. Moos (1979) stated that school climate involves three dimensions: the relationships that exist between members of the organization, the personal development of the organizational members, and the maintenance and change of the organization.

A qualitative interpretive study researching PBIS as a behavioral strategy that allows a school to establish consistent expectations for students served as the basis for this study. Longitudinal student referral data has been collected by the school administration for every year that PBIS has existed on their campus as a means to

demonstrate the effectiveness of PBIS on improving student behaviors. Six years of longitudinal student referral data was obtained and used to establish the relationship that exists between the number of referrals for a given year when compared to the total student population at participant high school. A PBIS teacher questionnaire that asks four Likert scale questions and four open-ended questions of all teachers was used to establish similarities and differences in the participant responses and general responses for this study through the purposeful selection process. A four question semi-structured interview with open-ended questions regarding PBIS and school climate was used to determine the personal feelings of individual teachers on the effectiveness of PBIS. Teacher responses from seven teachers who have taught at the target school for at least the past four to six years were analyzed. The results of the semi-structured interviews were used to study teachers in their natural environment. The focus of this study sought to understand whether student success in the educational environment also leads to greater job satisfaction for the teachers in the school where they work. Since both student success and teacher satisfaction are key to producing a quality educational institution, the relationship that must exist between how students behave and how teachers feel about the educational environment in which they work will be the focus of this research. The following research question guided this study:

  R_1: How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high

  school teacher's perceptions of school climate?

  Data were gathered, and the research question was answered through student referral data, survey information, a PBIS teacher questionnaire, and responses to the semi-structured interviews. Through an interpretive approach, the teachers expressed

their thoughts and beliefs about the PBIS program and its impact on their perceptions of school climate. Responses to interview questions were used to attempt to gain deeper insight into teachers' perceptions and to acquire information about other factors that may also influence teachers to acquire about their school.

Advancing Scientific Knowledge

Recent safety issues in public schools, coupled with high demands for student achievement, have raised the bar for ensuring a safe and secure environment for teachers and students across the United States. Teachers have a variety of obligations that they must effectively meet on a daily basis. In an effort to accomplish the tasks that must be completed every day, teachers must be able to manage their students in the classroom. Schoolwide PBIS have been proven to effectively improve student behavior and improve academic success for students (Oswald et al., 2005).

 PBIS is an applied science that uses educational methods to create more individually centered alternatives to dealing with adverse situations (Warren et al., 2006). While PBIS has proven to be very effective in helping students improve, very little research exists that demonstrates what PBIS does for teachers. Student behavior impacts school climate and therefore there is a balance that must exist for school climate to be perceived positively. Climate is an indication of how well the school is realizing its full potential for students and teachers alike (Gunbayi, 2007). As a means to improve school climate, research exists (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Eber et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2006; Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, & Fischer, 2011) that demonstrates the benefits to having PBIS on a school campus. Teachers are the conduit between implementation of a schoolwide behavior plan that works and student perceptions about school. Limited

research exists defining how a schoolwide behavior plan benefits the teachers whom implement the program themselves. PBIS, just like any schoolwide behavior plan, takes time to implement and develop. When teachers understand that their efforts as an individual contribute to the betterment of the school as a whole, they are more likely to understand how the PBIS program will allow them to have more uninterrupted instructional time with their students (Warren et al., 2006).

This study advanced the scientific knowledge that exists regarding schoolwide behavior plans and their influence on how teachers' perceive their school climate as school districts and school leaders examine the many different schoolwide behavior plans that may be used to improve student behavior on a school campus. The data gathered from this study may assist school leaders who might be considering the potential benefits of using a schoolwide behavior plan for their school. Because very little research exists in this area, this study attempted to demonstrate the benefits that exist regarding PBIS and how those benefits are passed on to the teachers that implement them. With the added pressure of school safety and nation-wide school standards, it is now more important than ever that teachers feel supported and have a positive connection to their place of employment.

Using qualitative research through an interpretive design that identifies demographic differences and responses to open-ended interview questions, this study identified factors that may contribute to teachers' positive perceptions of their school climate as a direct result of the implementation of the PBIS initiative. Through collection of semi-structured interview responses to open-ended questions and analysis of the PBIS teacher questionnaire data, this study attempted to determine whether having PBIS in

place contributes to teachers' perceptions of school climate. The teachers who participated in this study have been involved with PBIS for a minimum of four to six years; there was a great deal of insight that was learned from their experiences. Three years of longitudinal student referral data were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the PBIS initiative to improve student behavior. When classrooms are free of student behavior issues that disrupt the learning environment for all students, teachers have more time to deliver the quality instruction necessary for increasing the academic success of those students they teach (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

The results of this study may assist principals and educators by identifying benefits of having a schoolwide behavior management program in place that may lead to influenced perceptions about school climate from teachers themselves. This study may also benefit principals and school administrators who are considering implementing a schoolwide behavior program at their own schools as well. Additionally, principals and school administrators may be able to identify key components of a schoolwide behavior plan that may also lead to reduced student discipline referrals on a high school campus. Understanding the relationship that may exist between an effective schoolwide behavior plan for students and teacher efficacy may help to close the gap that exists in the literature.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is that it explored how a well-known schoolwide behavior plan for students' influences the way teachers' perceive their school climate. High school students' academic success and the correlation to improved student behavior in a high school environment has been a topic of research for many years (Scott et al.,

2010; Collie et al., 2012). According to Yablon and Addington (2010), in an effort to be successful in a time of continuous school reforms, the abilities of educators to manage student behavior effectively is key to academic success. It has been determined that students who feel valued and trusted at their school are more likely to have high academic success than those students who feel a sense of disconnection to their school (Oswald et al., 2005).

Many factors such as relationships and rapport can influence school climate and the way people feel about their place of employment. Demographical factors such as age, gender, years of experience, and years of education can affect the way a teacher perceives school climate. While it is an educator's professional responsibility to keep students safe at school, it is also their professional duty to make sure that students understand and follow all school rules. Finding the balance between protector and disciplinarian significantly affects student-teacher relationships.

Research states that teachers will have a more positive perception of school climate at a school where students' behavior is not an interruption to the educational environment and academic success is made possible (Coffey & Horner, 2012). This study addressed factors that contribute to a positive school climate as well as explored how PBIS and its philosophy improves student behavior and improves academic success. A review of the literature supports the finding that PBIS decreases student misbehavior and increases academic success (Oswald et al., 2005; Hoyle et al., 2011; Coffey & Horner, 2012). Literature also supports the need for improved school climate and the benefits of having a safe school for students and a positive school climate for teachers to work in

(Warren et al., 2006; Miramontes et al., 2011; Eber et al., 2011; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

According to Miramontes et al. (2011), criteria for evaluating behavioral support programs are a moving target. One such criterion is the teachers themselves who are responsible for the implementation of the program. How teachers feel about the program, their willingness to participate, and the benefits they see from the program all drive program effectiveness. In complex educational settings, educators may feel overwhelmed with promised results from behavioral plans that can be implemented (Miramontes et al., 2011). Teachers who buy in to a schoolwide behavioral program and are committed to its success must have reliable and valid measures that define the program benefits students and improves the quality of education. In an effort to answer the research question, how does PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate, an analysis of data was presented. Responses from the four open-ended question semi-structured interviews, as well as the PBIS teacher questionnaire data and three years of student discipline data collected for this study, were shared as a means to demonstrate the quality of education that may be perceived by teachers. The exploration of the relationship that may exist between student behavior and teacher efficacy may exist as a direct result of implementing PBIS as a schoolwide behavior plan was the focus of this research. The results of this study will benefit the school administration and the teachers themselves in understanding the impact that PBIS may or may not have on their own school climate. Understanding the perceptions that exist will allow the school to plan strategically to further improve the climate of their school as perceived by the teachers who work there.

Rationale for Methodology

The use of rigorous qualitative research methodology not only enhances the development of qualitative measures; it can also enhance the dissemination of comparative data and improve research efforts (Sofer, 2012; Johnson, Burke, & Gielen, 2011). The use of qualitative research through interpretive design as a research approach that provided the research tools that are needed to study or understand complex phenomena and subjects within their natural environment was the focus of this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study attempted to determine whether the existence of PBIS has any influence on how teachers perceive their school climate. According to Mertens (2010), qualitative research requires the collection of data at the site where teachers experience the issue or problem being studied in order to understand the issue or problem being studied. Since perceptions are based on individual thoughts and feelings, it was necessary to use interpretive inquiry to understand what teachers are feeling. Snelgrove (2014) examined the methodological and epistemological challenges experienced when conducting a longitudinal interpretive analysis of patients' experience with back pain. His research solidifies the notion that an qualitative interpretive analysis draws on the experience of managing interpretive analysis. Furthermore, according to Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006), the questions of research that defines data collection and analysis, and then reports the results of that data through the development of themes that exist. Through a natural inquiry approach, this study sought to understand if an influence exists between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of school climate in their own natural setting. Since the collection of interview data was done through electronic surveys and face-to-face interviews, the researcher did not directly observe teachers in their classrooms. An

qualitative interpretive approach was selected for this study because seeking to

understand teachers in their natural environment was the focus. Focus groups and

interviews are now a standard part of developing research survey questions that can be

used to help researchers better understand the phenomenon they seek to explore (Sofer,

2012; Lauer, 2006).

Quantitative methodology would not have worked for this study because this

study did not intend to study relationships between variables, differences between groups,

or results of experiments. Instead, this study attempted to develop an in-depth

understanding about the nature of systems, assumptions, and social constructs. Over the

last decade or two, qualitative research paradigm has been deemed successful and has

increased its effectiveness (Mus, 2012). The world of education, educational research,

and qualitative oriented research has predominantly been used to try to understand

subjects in their own natural environment. Qualitative research had been developed

mainly out of concern for restoring meaning within the social sciences (Mus, 2012).

Understanding meaning requires that research not only be done in the natural

environment of the subjects being studied; it also requires that one seek to understand

personal perceptions of those individuals. Klopper (2008) stated that qualitative

methodology is best used when little is known about a particular topic, the context of the

research is poorly understood, the boundaries are not clearly defined, the phenomenon is

not quantifiable, or the nature of the problem is not clearly defined.

The program being studied is PBIS and the influence the program may have on

teachers' perception of the school climate on a high school campus. While PBIS has been

successful in impacting and influencing students in positive ways, it is not known

whether there is any relationship between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of the school climate. The research question that guided this study is: How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate? When a qualitative interpretive approach is used correctly, its epistemological position is rooted and an assumption is made that subjective data can inform the research about subjects understanding of their own experiences (Snelgrove, 2014; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014).

The use of a qualitative interpretive study was used to answer the research question for this study. A qualitative interpretive study is a research approach that can explore the sense that participants make of their own social world or define a phenomenon within its own natural environment using a variety of data sources (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Five demographical questions in an electronic survey were used as a means to identify purposefully teachers to be interviewed at the participant high school in Southern Arizona. According to Wagstaff and Williams (2014), an interpretive study can be used to interpret the participants' interpretations of their own experiences in an effort to understand a phenomenon and to generalize. An interpretive study as part of the qualitative methodology allowed for the gathering of information from teachers in their own natural environment and allowed for the exploration of student/teacher relationships that exist in classrooms (Lauer, 2006). Since this study focused on interpreting the influence that PBIS has on school climate as perceived by teachers, an interpretive study is the best approach (Yin, 2013; Snelgrove, 2014). Information about teachers' perceptions were gathered and analyzed to determine themes that may exist. A five question demographic survey regarding gender, ethnic background, years of

teaching, educational background, and years of teaching as well as a PBIS teacher

questionnaire at that particular school was used to gain insight into the school climate that

exists. A four question semi-structured interview was conducted that asked teachers'

personal perspectives on PBIS and school climate and was used to identify teachers'

perceptions of the schoolwide behavior initiative. The demographic survey and the PBIS

teacher participation survey were given to approximately 75 teachers who have taught at

the participant high school for at least four to six years. Seven teachers, based on

responses to years of teaching experience at the participant high school, were

purposefully selected and interviewed. Teachers of each sub group who have taught at the

participant high school for four to six years as well as teaching experience were used for

this study. The data collected provided historical information and the ability to determine

what themes may exist while controlling the line of questioning (Johnson & Christensen,

2012; Mertens, 2010).

Nature of the Research Design for the Study

While qualitative research seeks to find or explain the causes of changes in social

facts through objective measurement and analysis, quantitative research also seeks to

study a phenomenon to quantify participant responses and interpret those responses

(Arghode, 2012). Qualitative research methodology for this dissertation through an

interpretive design was based on the attempt to explore a phenomenon that may be

specific to a single site (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Based on that

rationale, qualitative interpretive research design has been selected for this research

because this study explored how teachers interpretations of their experiences that

influence their personal feelings about their school climate as well as sought to

understand if PBIS has any influence on those perceptions which fits the characteristics of a qualitative model. According to Wagstaff and Williams (2014), qualitative interpretive studies provide tools that may be used by researchers to explore the sense that participants make of their own personal or social worlds. A narrative design was considered but did not fit because this design merely describes the lives of individuals to gain meaning from them. This study sought to identify teachers' actual thoughts and feelings on school climate and not just describe their school climate.

The ethnography design was also considered but did not fit the intent of this study. Like an interpretive design, ethnography research is used for the purpose of going into an environment and studying to understand a specific group in the natural setting in which they work, live, or participate. While this study examined teachers in their own environment, interviews of teachers happened one time and not several times over a significant period. After examining the various qualitative designs available, the interpretive design was chosen because it best fit the nature of the study.

The research being conducted attempted to establish the meaning of the phenomenon established through PBIS by the teachers of the study. The research design chosen for this study stemmed from the gap in literature lacking empirical qualitative works on schoolwide behavior plans benefitting teachers. When an interpretive approach is applied correctly to a study, it becomes a valuable method for health science research that will allow the researcher to develop theory and recognize contributions (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014).

Qualitative interpretations of the teachers being studied is recorded to better understand perceptions and develop an understanding of the phenomenon that exists

(Arghode, 2012; Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006). The rationale behind selecting an

interpretive method over other qualitative research design was based on the attempt to

understand the influence that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of their school climate.

According to Wagstaff and Williams (2014), an interpretive design should be used when

the focus of the study seeks to explore how and why something exists. The sense made of

those involved in the study and the contextual conditions that influence interpretations are

relevant to the phenomenon, and the boundaries between the phenomenon and context

that are not clearly defined.

The interpretive study approach allows the ability to design interview questions

specific to the phenomenon being studied and to use open-ended questions to find out

what the teachers' think and feel in face-to-face interviews (Hopkins, 2002; Johnson &

Christensen, 2012; Lauer, 2006; Mertens, 2010). Because this study was based on

phenomenology and on the perceptions of teachers alone, this study did not lend itself to

a mixed methods approach (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen,

2012; Mertens, 2010). The mixed methods approach could be used if the researcher chose

to analyze statistical data that was relevant to student behavior and compare more than

one school or location (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lauer, 2006). In order to

understand the stories of the teachers themselves and their perceptions at a single school,

an interpretive approach allows for closer collaboration between the researcher and the

teachers that are being studied (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014).

A qualitative interpretive study was selected for this study providing the ability to

interact with teachers in their own school environment where they can tell their stories

and share their positions and feelings (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014; Merriam, 2009:

Roberts, 2013; Mertens, 2010). An electronic survey regarding demographic information, an electronic PBIS teacher questionnaire, along with open-ended interview questions were used to gather teachers' thoughts and feelings about their school environment. The survey of five demographical questions was asked in order to determine the target group of teachers who were used for this study. Those teachers were able to best support the research question and discover whether PBIS has any influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate. An electronic PBIS teacher survey was given to all teachers and data were collected in order to understand how the general teaching population felt about the influence of PBIS on the same focus areas that the purposefully selected teachers expressed in their interview responses. The school being studied has had PBIS in place for six consecutive school years and PBIS has been a part of their school culture. This study examined the culture that exists amongst a group of teachers through the qualitative interpretive design that used a teacher questionnaire and open-ended questioning from teachers who have been on the school campus and involved in PBIS program for at least four to six years (Merriam, 2009). Longitudinal student referral data also exists as a means to demonstrate the number of student referrals when compared to the total population on one high school campus.

The teachers in this qualitative interpretive study are teachers who teach in a public high school in Southern Arizona. The teachers have taught at the research site for a minimum of four years and have been a part of the implementation and sustainability of the PBIS program on this school campus. Teachers were purposefully selected as a target group based on their responses to the demographic information. Their selection was specifically based on the number of years of experience teaching at the participant high

school. While the number of years teaching at the participant high school and years of education were asked of all teachers, only those teachers who have been on the school campus for at least the past four to six years were invited to participate in this study. These teachers participated in face-to-face interviews that included four open-ended questions. Participant responses from the survey questions were coded and themes were developed following the three step coding process as outlined by Merriam (Merriam, 2009). PBIS teacher questionnaire data were also used to gather information on similarities and differences amongst the general teaching population and the teachers based on their own personal perspectives.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a U.S. federally designated system that measures whether or not states and school districts are making satisfactory progress toward passing mandated tests and meeting the goals of NCLB through proficient levels of students academic success by the year 2014 (Forte, 2010).

Administrative support. Administrative support is defined as those efforts taken by administration to acquire resources, supporting staff, providing clear expectations, and providing feedback regarding the progress of implementation and sustainability (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Behavior interventions. Behavior interventions are strategies used by school personnel to decrease discipline problems in students (Hoyle et al., 2011).

Contextually Appropriate Innovation (CAI). CAI is innovation that is aligned to both state education agency and local education agency standards (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Data-based decision making (DDM). Data-based decision-making requires an organization to have explicit systems to collect and share data with an entire school staff to provide corrective feedback on innovative efforts (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): NCLB was passed in 2001 and is designed to increase student achievement and hold states and schools accountable for the academic progress of all students (Forte, 2010).

Phenomenon: A phenomenon is defined as a fact or situation that is observed to identify a relationship of a central theme or themes to be studies or defined (Miramontes et al., 2011).

Positive behavior intervention strategies (PBIS). PBIS is a behavioral approach that uses systems change methodology in an effort to minimize students problem behaviors, increase students' quality of life, and increase the likelihood of academic success in school (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Safe school. A safe school is defined as one that is lacking violence, fear, drugs, alcohol, and where the school climate promotes learning for students and a feeling of being safe (Bosworth et al., 2011).

School climate. School climate is the quality of relationships that exists between individuals at a school, the teaching and learning processes that take place, and the collaborative efforts that exist between teachers and administrative staff members (Collie et al., 2012).

School violence. School violence is defined as violent behaviors that endanger the health, welfare, and safety of students and teachers (Lunenburg, 2010).

Schoolwide evaluation tool (SET). A schoolwide evaluation tool is designed to assess and evaluate the critical attributes of a schoolwide behavior plan for every school year (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). SWPBS is a prevention minded approach for student discipline that is characterized by defining and teaching behavioral expectations, rewarding positive behaviors, continual evaluation of behavior effectiveness, and integrating supports for both individual students and the school as a whole (Warren et al., 2006).

Shared vision. Shared vision is an agreement between school personnel and school leadership about the core components of innovation and what the implementation of those components will look like (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

Social validity. Social validity is described as the value that society places on a product (Miramontes et al., 2011).

Student-teacher relationships. Student-teacher relationships are defined as the quality of students' ability to interact with their teachers based on their perceptions of the classroom environment, their engagement, and achievement (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

Teacher commitment. Teacher commitment is defined as the psychological bond between teachers for their profession and the organization in which they work (Collie et al., 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

   This study may determine that assumptions and limitations affect outcomes, findings, and methodology. The following assumptions have been identified as present in this study:

1. It was assumed that teachers' demographic backgrounds and experience using the PBIS program may also influence their perceptions about their school climate. Teaching students and having good classroom management is a craft that can only be improved over time. Teachers in the public school setting learn command of their classrooms through experience as successful practitioners in the classroom. For this reason alone, gender, age, experience, and educational background may also play a role in how teachers feel about their school climate.

2. It was assumed that this study is an accurate representation of current perceptions of teachers in Southern Arizona and that all teachers answered interview questions openly and honestly. The teachers for this study cooperatively answered survey questions that were asked of them and were able to elaborate through open-ended questioning on their feelings regarding PBIS and their own perceptions of their school climate.

The following limitations/delimitations may be present in this study:

1. Teachers used for this study have only experienced PBIS as a schoolwide behavior management system, which may skew their perceptions.

2. Teachers who were interviewed have worked on the participant high school campus for a minimum of four to six years and may not be able to differentiate their own perceptions about school climate.

3. The interpretive study participation was limited to only those teachers who had taught at the participant high school for four years or more.

4. The student referral data that is presented in this study corroborates how the teacher participants have responded to the interview questions and supports only their perceptions and positive impressions of their school climate.

5. Additional factors that may contribute to perceptions of school climate were limited to only the target group of teachers and this single school environment. Not all schools that use PBIS can necessarily generalize findings in this study. Factors that affect every school such as socio economic make up, location, school finances, and legislative issues may also influence school climate and teacher perceptions.

There is a lack of research to support a connection between PBIS and teachers' feelings about their school climate. This research was delimited to only one high school in Southern Arizona. The study was limited to only teachers who had been on the school campus for at least the past four to six years, which could have limited the demographic sample. The participant high school in Southern Arizona was chosen for this study because they are the only high school in Arizona to have as much as six years' experience and exposure to PBIS on their campus. Teachers with less than four to six years' experience using PBIS at the participant high school were not selected as teachers for this study since teachers with less than four to six years' experience may not understand PBIS well enough to understand its influence on their own perceptions. Limitations my also exist because of the positive impressions the teachers have about their students. Because student referral data was not available pre-implementation of the PBIS program, benefits

to themselves and their school climate may be more associated with teachers' own perceptions or expectations rather than the PBIS program itself, not demonstrating causality. The research delimited middle school and elementary studies. The study was only delimited through a qualitative approach and findings may not be generalized.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

High school students have a great deal of challenges they face every day. Likewise, teachers also have a great deal of pressure to increase the academic success of these students. Due to high stakes testing and an increased push in academic standards in society, "public schools are caught between a proverbial rock and hard place" (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). In an effort to help all students connect to their school, the use of PBIS can be used to help all students feel like they belong at their school and to achieve academic success.

In an effort to meet these demands and to ensure that every student receives the quality education they deserve, schools and school districts have turned to schoolwide behavioral plans that outline the expectations they have for their students (Warren et al., 2006). The PBIS model or approach for changing behavior uses systems of change methodology in an effort to minimize individual student's problem behaviors, increase the quality of education, and increase the likelihood that students will be academically successful (Coffey & Horner, 2012). When schoolwide behavioral plans are used successfully to improve student behavior and to improve the quality of education taking place, then the entire school climate becomes much more positive for students and teachers alike.

There is a growing body of research that demonstrates that schoolwide positive behavior and supports (SWPBS) reduce behavioral problems for students and help students improve their academic success (Eber et al., 2011). That success and improved student behavior can lend itself to influence students' perceptions of school climate in a very positive way. A gap in literature exists and little research has been done to determine whether having schoolwide positive behavior and supports in place have any influence in how teachers view their school climate. When students behave and teachers can teach without interruption, the school climate is very positive for most teachers. There is ample research to show that teachers are generally very satisfied with all aspects of their job related to teaching when schoolwide behavior plans are in place (Collie et al., 2012; Butt et al., 2005; Crossmen & Harris, 2006; Dinham & Scott, 1998; Kim & Loadman, 1994).

A review of the literature supports the finding that PBIS decreases student misbehavior and increases academic success. Literature also supports the need for improved school climate and the benefits of having a safe school for students and a positive school climate for teachers in which to work. Although the conceptual foundations of PBIS at a macro level have been widely used and described in literature, the benefits of having schoolwide behavior interventions for the teachers themselves has been presented through very limited examples (Scott et al., 2010). The relationship that may or may not exist between these two phenomena was the premise for the research that was implemented in this study.

Chapter 2 will present a review of current research and provide the theoretical foundation of the dissertation literature review in preparation for this study. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology, research design, and procedures for ethical treatment used

in this study. Chapter 4 will detail how the interpretive study was analyzed and provide both a written and graphic summary of the results. Chapter 5 will provide the interpretation and discussion of the results as it relates to the existing body of research related to PBIS and teacher perceptions of school environment.

Preparation for the research and interview questions was completed by September of 2014. Pending Grand Canyon University IRB approval, semi-formal interviews and data collection were conducted at the school site in October of 2014. Analysis of the data took place in October of 2014. Completion of the research conducted and writing the formal dissertation was completed in December of 2014.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how teachers feel about the PBIS initiative and if they feel the PBIS has any effect on school climate at the participant high school in Southern Arizona. Historically, high school students' academic success and their sense of belonging or connectivity to their school have been associated with high school dropout rates and graduation in many research studies for several years now. While school safety and the ability to feel safe at school still is a significant problem that school leaders and their students have to contend with, students' sense of belonging and their ability to be successful academically in high school is something that cannot be ignored (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). The literature review provides the impact that school safety, violence in schools, and public school safety measures have on schools and school leaders. Furthermore, the literature review provided information on how schools are using a team decision-making approach to implement the use of Positive Behavior supports to reduce student discipline referrals and to improve school climate. This chapter reviews the background of the study and discusses the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1997) as the theoretical basis of the research for this study. Succeeding the background for the study and the theoretical framework, school safety, violence in schools, public school safety measures, positive behavior supports, team decision-making, discipline referrals, and school climate was explored. Public school safety measures will dictate the rationale behind the need for new approaches to attempt to change students' behavior in an effort to combat school violence. PBIS introduce a new educational thinking and new methods to work with students on school campuses to

improve student behavior and reduce the need for discipline referrals. Lastly, a summary of the entire chapter will conclude with a transition statement to the methodology that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

To discuss effectively the key components of PBIS and how they influence teachers' perceptions on their school climate, key words were used to survey the shifts that have occurred in dealing with school safety and student behaviors in ways that are more positive. PBIS is a model of application that uses a behaviorally based system to address school and classroom discipline issues. PBIS, when implemented correctly, can develop schoolwide systems that support staff to teach and promote positive behavior in all students (Betters-Bubon, 2012). Finally, the literature review surveyed information about how school climate affects both students and teachers on school campuses.

Background. Since 2001, America's public education has been regulated by federal mandates that will be ending at the conclusion of the year 2014. The NCLB Act of 2001 focused its attention on meeting the needs of all students regardless of socioeconomic status (NCLB, 2002). The focus of the NCLB Act was to ensure that all students meet or exceed reading and mathematics state standards with 100% proficiency by the conclusion of the 2014 academic school year. Under the NCLB act, schools are identified for improvement based on application of an adequate yearly progress (AYP) algorithm that is well defined in the NCLB legislation and ensuing regulations (Forte, 2010; Lauer, 2006). With a focus on annual yearly progress and a performance based accountability system in our global society, the challenge of increased accountability that public education faces is being met with mixed reactions across the country (Forte, 2010). The NCLB Act of 2001 has challenged administrators to be more accountable for

their students' education by employing highly qualified teachers that employ both effective and research-based instructional practices (NCLB, 2002). Generally, when asked to recount their high school experience, most teenagers report that interpersonal features are the most critical to their school engagement (Coleman, 1961). Students often have been reported needing to feel like they belong to various social groups on their campuses. The innate ability to develop relationships within those social circles can influence their motivation and their academic success hinges on their social lives.

High school students today have many more challenges and have a greater amount of pressure on them to be academically successful than those generations before them. With the added pressures to be academically successful, there is growing evidence that students' experience of belonging is being jeopardized (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994). High school students need to feel accepted by the educators they associate with. The sense of belonging and the role that belonging plays in student motivation impacts achievement for all students which cannot be ignored. With the added academic pressure that has been put on educators and students alike, it is now more important than ever that students feel comfortable and safe at their school if they intend to be successful through high stakes testing (Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe, & Aelterman, 2008). The added academic pressures of high stakes testing that high school student's face can lead to students demonstrating disruptive behaviors in the classroom affecting the learning of all students thus, creating more pressure to succeed.

Teachers' concerns about discipline problems and the possibility of violence in public schools have resulted in efforts to find more effective methods to maintain safe school environments (Hoyle et al., 2011). If students are going to overcome the

educational challenges they face, they must be free from distractions that would interfere with that success. As discipline issues and school violence are on the rise, many school leaders have turned to schoolwide behavior supports in an effort to provide a positive school environment where discipline problems decrease and student academic skills can improve (Hoyle et al., 2011). PBIS is a schoolwide behavior plan that many schools have turned to in the last decade to attempt to eliminate disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

While PBIS has been reported to be successful in eliminating disruptive student behavior and assist in improving the academic success of students, there is a gap in the literature that examines what having PBIS in place does for the teachers themselves. High school students not only need to graduate successfully, they need to ensure they have taken rigor in their courses and have high enough marks to give them a competitive edge in getting into the colleges and universities they desire to attend. In his study, Osterman (2000) highlighted dimensions of student-teacher relations, peer relations, and the involvement in school activities as the "key to social experiences known to tie adolescents to their schools in ways that enhance motivation and achievement as well as demonstrating how variable researchers have defined the impact on student success" (p. 294).

Because there is such a great deal of pressure for high school students to be academically successful, it is important that schools and school administrators focus their attention on their students' sense of belonging to their school. Research has been conducted that suggests that through the use of PBIS, students can be academically successful and feel like they are connected to their school. Students are all unique individuals and have various intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate them

academically, but the need for a sense of belonging is something they all have in common. PBIS by design allows teachers to recognize students' efforts by rewarding those desirable behaviors demonstrated by students in the classroom rather than focusing on the negative behaviors that some students exhibit.

Creating this safe environment where students feel safe and secure can also be described as having a positive school climate. School climate is described as the feelings that teachers and students have about their school and the way the students and teachers cohabitate together (Gunbayi, 2007). The way that teachers treat students can affect students' feelings about their school environment. Likewise, the way students behave during the school day can have a significant impact on how teachers feel about their school climate. Gunbayi (2007) stated that every educational institution has their own unique climate that distinguishes themselves from other schools and organizations. PBIS allow schools to track students' misbehaviors while analyzing what is happening, when it is happening, and where it is happening in an effort to change undesirable student behaviors.

By creating a reward system that demonstrates to students that they are valued and important can help students find that sense of belonging. In an effort to help all students connect to their school, positive intervention systems can be used to help all students feel like they belong at their school and impact the academic success students are capable of. Students' problem behaviors are a critical component that affects a safe school environment at schools all over the United States (Han & Akiba, 2011). The PBIS model is an application of behaviorally based systems that addresses school and classroom discipline problems.

PBIS develop schoolwide systems that encourage faculty and staff to teach and promote positive behavior in all students. Even in schools where there is a high academic success rate, there are still students who never find their sense of belonging and therefore struggle through high school. Through a qualitative interpretive study of a high school that has successfully implemented PBIS, school leaders and teachers alike will benefit from the data that was presented regarding the influence that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of school climate. High school students have a great deal of social and academic challenges they face every day. Being prepared to exemplify positive behavior, school personnel can increase students' sense of belonging and therefore affect the academic success that they have at their school. Just as NCLB set the goal of 100% proficiency for students by the end of 2014, the goal of the implementation of PBIS is to achieve 100% of high school students' feeling connected to their school while being academically successful in school and in life.

In an effort to better understand the relationship that may exist between successful implementation of the PBIS program and the benefits that may exist for the teachers who implement the program themselves, this chapter presents an introduction of the study, the theoretical foundations, a review of literature, and a summary. The review of literature itself has been organized into subsections that all affect the need for PBIS and may affect school climate. The subsections that exist within the literature review are school safety, violence in schools, public school safety measures, positive behavior supports, team decision-making, discipline referrals, and school climate. Important to the field, these topics review the need for schoolwide behavior plans and the influence that may affect school climate for teachers.

The research that has been examined from various studies demonstrates that PBIS can be very powerful in changing a school's climate while improving student behavior. Every school is different and has its own unique challenges, but research suggests that these challenges can be addressed through PBIS or other schoolwide behavior programs if the school faculty and staff are committed to its implementation. PBIS include the process of putting together a committed team that is dedicated to being trained and implementing the process to the entire faculty and staff. The recent increase of school violence and the need for increased school safety, combined with the challenge of high stakes testing and the desire for academic success for all students, was the basis for the literature reviewed in this study. The topics reviewed in this chapter all have an impact on both students and teachers alike in the educational process that exists in public high schools.

Disciplinary action taken by schools that keeps the best interest of students in mind demonstrates their effort to minimize the gap in academic achievement based on student's age, gender, and socioeconomic status while holding students accountable for their own behavior (Han & Akiba, 2011). PBIS are very interesting in that they have been used at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Each level has its own challenges that are unique to the age of the students and the community or environment that surround the school. The administration of a school also has a significant impact on the successful implementation of PBIS and must be completely committed for the implementation to work. As with any educational initiative being implemented, the principal must be the driver behind the initiative if there is going to be buy-in by the teaching staff. There is research that exists demonstrating some of the challenges that can

be associated with implementation of schoolwide programs. While there are always challenges to implementation of new discipline programs, taking a positive approach to discipline like PBIS has shown significant decreases in problem behavior. The student referral process and how student discipline is tracked must be consistent and is critical in showing growth or improvement to the faculty and staff.

With school violence on the rise and federal mandates for high stakes testing over the past decade, PBIS has demonstrated effective results for students through the use of evidence-based practices uniformly administered is more important than ever before in schools today (Coffey & Horner, 2012). The added pressure for a national curriculum in recent years as well as student achievement results being the deciding factor for teacher retention decisions by school districts makes it even more important to create a positive school climate. While PBIS originally began as an elementary school behavior strategy, is has drastically evolved over time. PBIS has been deemed successful in changing student behaviors and improving the school climate for students themselves at the high school level. A gap in the literature exists in that it is still not known whether PBIS has any influence on teachers themselves regarding their feeling about school climate (Mifflen, 2008).

The increase of school violence and the number of students who now are diagnosed with social and emotional issues makes it more important than ever that schools have some type of schoolwide behavior plan in place to control students in the classroom. Historically, schools and school districts have used no tolerance initiatives as a means to remove students from school rather than face their issues with them (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Important to the field, this chapter reviews the background of the study

and uses Mezirow's transformative learning theory as the theoretical basis for the research. The literature used for this study was surveyed by using key words such as school safety, violence in schools, public school safety measures, positive behavior supports, team decisions making, discipline referrals, and school climate.

Theoretical Foundations

This qualitative interpretive study explored the perspectives of teachers through Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory is a structural shift of thought, theory, and actions (Kitchenham, 2008). Transformative learning theory employs a systematic process of effecting change in a frame of reference. This study explored how PBIS influence teachers' perceptions of school climate. Understanding the phenomenon that exists through teachers real world experiences is the role of the transformative theory researcher. According to Kucukaydin and Cranton (2012), transformative learning theory and its concepts related to psychological structures are not clearly defined and are often used in different ways by different researchers or by the same researcher for different reasons. This qualitative interpretive study was designed to explore how PBIS influence teachers' perceptions of their own school climate. The interpretive design was also used to determine whether teachers' demographical difference has any influence on those same perceptions.

Transformative learning theory relies greatly on cognitive reason alone; however, it understates the role of active involvement of emotions and feelings within the transformative learning process (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012). The research question that guided this study asks how the PBIS initiative influences teachers' perceptions of school climate. The literature reviewed in this chapter outlines the phenomenon that

exists between students' behavior and teachers' perceptions in a high school environment. The literature review discussed how school safety has affected students' ability to feel connected to their school and the role federal mandates have played in changing educational outcomes. Since this study was designed to attempt to understand teachers in their own natural environment through a frame of reference that encompasses cognitive and emotional components, the transformative learning theory was best suited for this interpretive study (Kitchenham, 2008). The research question indicated a need to develop a theoretical foundation in order to determine how the influence of PBIS affects teachers' perceptions in a high school setting since a sound theoretical foundation does not currently exist (Jones & Alony, 2011).

The phenomena being studied was PBIS and its influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate on a high school campus. Transformative learning has become arguably one of the most provocative ideas for understanding relationships and theory of self (Dirkx, 2012). While PBIS has been successful in impacting and influencing students in a positive ways, it is not known whether there is any relationship between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of their school climate. School climate involves three dimensions: the relationships that exist between members of the organization, the personal development of the organizational members, and the maintenance and change of the organization (Collie et al., 2012). This study expanded on the existing body of knowledge surrounding school safety, the school environment, student discipline, and the need for schoolwide behavior interventions and supports to improve school climate (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Furthermore, this study expanded on previous claims that PBIS not only improves students' behavior on a school campus, but that is also improves

students' academic success leading to a more positive school climate. Transformative learning has evolved over time as a frame of reference that influences habits of mind or meaning perspectives that lead to perspective transformation and unanswered questions that may exist (Kitchenham, 2008).

According to Dirkx (2012), as researchers construct and reconstruct the meaning of one's life experiences, the more conscious we become of how people think and make sense of their self-worth. The research that was conducted for this study involves exploring how PBIS not only provide benefits to the students for whom it was intended, but that there may also be positive ramifications for teachers themselves. Kitchenham (2008) stated that transformative learning theory is considered an appropriate choice for research study when frame of reference provides responses when dealing with new situations or challenges we face. This study sought to explore the underlying benefits or transformative learning surrounding the use of a schoolwide behavior plan (PBIS) for the teachers' who implement and enforce the expectations that surround it (Barnett, 2012).

Review of the Literature

Since 2001, America's public education school system has been regulated by Federal mandates that will be ending at the conclusion of the year 2014. The NCLB Act of 2001 focused its attention on meeting the needs of all students regardless of socioeconomic status (NCLB, 2002). The focus of the NCLB Act is to ensure that all students meet or exceed reading and mathematics state standards with 100% proficiency by the conclusion of the 2014 academic school year. Under the NCLB act, schools are identified for improvement based on the application of an adequate yearly progress (AYP) algorithm that is defined in the NCLB legislation and ensuing regulations (Forte,

2010; Lauer, 2006). With a focus on AYP and a performance-based accountability system in our global society, the challenge public education faces with increased accountability is being met with mixed reactions across our country (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). The NCLB Act of 2001 has challenged administrators to be more accountable for students' education by employing highly qualified teachers who regularly use research-based instructional practices (NCLB, 2002). If students are going to overcome the educational challenges they face, they must be free from distractions that would interfere with their academic success.

The goal of SWPBS is to provide a positive school environment for students so that discipline problems decrease and student academic skills can improve (Hoyle et al., 2011; Betters-Bubon, 2012). High school students' connections to their school and the academic success they achieve through the implementation of a positive behavior intervention systems can influence the teachers' ability to manage and control students in the classroom. By using a student reward system for students based on their positive behaviors at school, this study explored the influence that PBIS have on teachers' perceptions of school environment in a high school setting (Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2011; Mifflen, 2008).

The PBIS model is an application of behaviorally based systems that addresses school and classroom discipline problems. PBIS develop schoolwide systems that support staff to teach and promote positive behavior in all students (Betters-Bubon, 2012). Faircloth and Hamm (2005) investigated the dimensions and mechanisms of that sense of belonging relevant to motivation in high school students. In their quantitative study, the authors chose to use survey data as well as students' perceptions of their teachers and

their peers as the motivations behind academic motivation in school. Likewise, Osterman (2000) highlighted dimensions of student-teacher relations and involvement in school activities as the key to social experiences. Prior research suggests that the quality of students' relationships with their teachers can be linked with student perceptions of their school. Since school climate can be linked to the shared experiences that both students and teachers share, it is not enough to just look at student perceptions alone.

In this qualitative interpretive study, longitudinal student discipline data was analyzed to demonstrate improved connectivity and an improved school climate for students. In his study on school climate and teacher perceptions on climate factors, Gunbayi (2007) examined differences in levels of variables related to school climate factors among teachers. In order to gather data for his study, teachers were asked to complete a personal particulars form that used age, gender, seniority, marital status, and education levels as a means to select teachers (Gunbayi, 2007). Like Gunbayi, this interpretive study used a teacher survey to gather demographic data on teachers and to determine participation.

In another study designed to determine teacher perceptions on school climate, Collie et al. (2012) investigated how teachers' perceived climate in their schools and their overall sense of job satisfaction. In their study, teachers were given a questionnaire via email and were asked specific questions about their personal feelings on school climate (Collie et al., 2012). While teachers in this interpretive study were not asked specific questions electronically about their perceptions on school climate, they were interviewed face-to-face to gather this information. What makes this study unique is that while PBIS have a positive affect students, it is not known whether the PBIS program implemented

by the teachers themselves, has any influence on their perceptions of the school

environment in which they work. School climate generally refers to the quality and

character of school life that exists for the students and teachers who interact together

(Yang et al., 2013). Through an interpretive design, this study included a teacher survey,

teacher interviews, and analysis of student discipline data as a means to answer the

research question.

      According to Wilkinson (2005), scientific practices can be applied through

interpretive studies to evaluate the success of an educational program in general

education classrooms. Research exists to support the use of an interpretive design as the

means of understanding an individual or group in their own natural setting. Likewise,

interpretive studies build on existing research and can be used for documenting the

effectiveness of a program as perceived by those who experience the program personally

(Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). Through research conducted on the successful

implementation of PBIS, students and educators will benefit from this study (Lane et al.,

2009). High school students' have a great deal of social and academic challenges they

face every day. Students who are reinforced for positive behavior can increase their sense

of belonging and therefore increase the academic success that they have at their school.

The direct benefit of the PBIS program for teachers can be improved student-teacher

relationships in the classroom, which make the teachers' job just a little bit easier.

      Just as NCLB had set the goal of 100% proficiency for students by 2014, the goal

of the implementation of PBIS would be to achieve that 100% of high school students

feel connected to their school and are academically successful in school and in life. High

school students are all unique individuals that all have various wants, needs, and desires

that make their high school experience meaningful. A decade of research exists that supports the importance of good classroom management and sheds the light on the dynamics of effectively working with students (Boulden, 2010). The more faculty and staff can create a positive environment through implementation of PBIS and reward students' both intrinsically and extrinsically for their positive behavior, the more likely those students' are to connect with their school (Mifflen, 2008).

The behavior intervention support team, in which teachers' are representatives, is a proactive schoolwide behavior management approach that can benefit all students. Through emphasis on relationships with students and their parents, developing known expectations and having high expectations for students improves the quality of education (Boulden, 2010). Teaching is a profession that takes a great deal of time to perfect and being able to relate to students is not always easy. A typical high school is made up of teachers from just one year of teaching experience to twenty plus years of experience. Just as teachers' are all unique individuals like the students they teach, demographic differences of teachers' may also affect the way they interact with students. When exploring teachers' perceptions of school climate, one must also consider the demographic differences that make up each teacher as an individual. Things like age, gender, years of teaching experience, years of teaching at an individual school, and educational experience may also greatly affect how each teacher feels about their school climate.

School safety. School safety and factors that contribute to the climate and culture of schools have been a topic of study for the past 30 years (Shelton, Owens, & Song, 2009). For students and school faculty alike, there are long and short-term repercussions

that occur when students' perceive themselves as being unsafe when at school (Yablon &
Addington, 2010). Recent events that have publicized school violence have caused
schools to take a much closer look at their own safety procedure and safety precautions
that guide how they do business. According to Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2012), safety
can be defined as the state of being free from injury or danger. Many schools have taken
the approach of locking classroom doors and ensuring their campuses can be locked
down from the public more easily and efficiently. In an effort to test these theories and
practices, Bosworth et al. (2011) compared and contrasted the relationship of perception
of school safety to the standardized test score ranking, the neighborhood characteristics,
and the school climate of several Arizona schools.

The idea of harm being inflicted on a child at a school is fundamentally
unacceptable and unimaginable to most adults in society (Bosworth et al., 2011).
According to their study, these authors found that statistics show that even with the much
publicized school shootings and school violence, students remain much safer at school
than anywhere else they can be (Bosworth et al., 2011). However, depending on the
school and the students that attend those schools, safety at school lies within the eyes of
the beholder. Direct victims of school violence and bullying at school suffer various
negative effects that include physical, emotional, social, and pedagogical factors that can
lead to depression (Yablon & Addington, 2010).

A student's perception that their school is unsafe may lead to fear and that fear
can produce its own set of consequences that can affect a student's ability to concentrate,
do schoolwork, and participate in activities (Lawrence, 2006; Yablon & Addington,
2010). Each school year, educators and parents alike have dealt with issues of learning

that stem from students' inability to concentrate due to fear that they feel when at school. While school safety is at the forefront of public school education, school safety measures are often met with resistance by the teaching staff, students, and their parents. The measure of relative safety of any school campus is based on the perceptions of students, faculty, and the staff of that school (Bosworth et al., 2011).

An extensive research base exists that supports the concept of involving families in their child's education to ensure their safety (Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006). When parents are informed about school safety measures and can support those efforts at home, the chance that students will be safer at school is greatly increased. Disconnections between home and the school can occur through misunderstanding by the school on the cultures of the families and students whom they serve (Howland et al., 2006). A school where these types of disconnects occur may suffer negative factors such as bullying, crime, and violence when they are combined with negative home life factors (Yablon & Addington, 2010).

In their study, Bosworth et al. (2011) used twenty-two focus groups with students and faculty that were conducted in 11 Arizona secondary schools based on their size, location, and proximity. All of the highly achieving Arizona public schools were selected with an effort to include a large urban middle school, a large suburban high school, a midsized suburban middle school, and a midsized rural high school. All of the charter schools in this group were large urban high schools and a midsized rural high school. All of the low-achieving public schools were selected to include a midsized urban middle school, a midsized rural middle school on an Indian Reservation, and a large rural middle school on an Indian Reservation.

The results of their study showed that in 9 of 11 schools, no faculty or students voiced any overwhelming concerns about school safety. When the authors asked what made a school safe, students tended to report more physical security features that existed (Bosworth et al., 2011). It was found that school climate and staff actions increased feelings of being safe at school. The faculty reported that relationships and climate were the key factors in making schools safe. Research in the area of school climate seems to be the overwhelming difference between schools in which students and faculty reported higher versus lower levels of violence, alcohol, and other drug use at their school (Yablon & Addington, 2010). The increase of school violence and its impact on students' ability to succeed academically has been a major factor in many schools turning to schoolwide behavior plans as a means to make their schools safe for all students. A schoolwide effort to decrease undesirable student behaviors and reward desirable behaviors has been a big paradigm shift from focusing on negative behavior for most educators.

Violence in schools. Several different authors throughout the past 20 years have researched the association between school safety measures and peer victimization (Yablon & Addington, 2010; Miramontes et al., 2011). Researchers have questioned whether there is an association between school safety measures and peer victimization in public schools. Blosnich and Bossarte (2011) collected data and obtained information from the 2007 School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey. Their study used logistic regression models that were constructed to determine the peer victimization outcomes. When analyzing school violence, it was also determined that there might be other influences in schools with more safety measures in place that are already experiencing more violence (Blosnich & Bossarte, 2011).

Lunenburg (2010) stated trends of growing violence that includes bullying and chaos in the classroom are unfortunately becoming the norm for many students in schools today. In an effort to try to make sense or even understand why violent acts are happening in school, one must also look outside the school for answers. In an effort to answer the questions, Lunenburg (2010) suggested asking the following questions: (a) are violent acts frequent, (b) how many incidents of bullying occur, and (c) are student disruptions in class perceived to be a problem by students and teachers alike. The answers to these questions will also describe the school environment that the students of any school experience on a daily basis.

The environment of the school is frequently measured by the school's ability to gauge students, teachers, and parents' satisfaction with the school (Johnson et al., 2011). While all of these different subgroups play a big role in creating a safe school environment, student academic success is often linked to how safe students feel at school. Violence in school is hindering the educational, psychological, and social development of students in schools across the U.S. (Johnson et al., 2011). Unfortunately, children are often exposed to violence at home, at school, and in the community (Laursen, 2011). In a home where students experience violence, those same students will often practice those same violent acts. However, in schools across the country, violence that was once more physical in nature has now turned to psychologically violent acts such as bullying (Laursen, 2011).

Bullying is a systematic way of harming others through repeated physical, verbal or psychological attacks, harassment, and intimidating gestures directed against an individual who is not capable of defending himself (Laursen, 2011). Bullying in most

schools has moved more from physical acts of violent to what is now known as cyber

bullying. Students' have turned from the pushing and shoving to using electronic means

such as social media sites to attack their classmates mentally. Cyber bullying involves

repeated forwarding of information or hurtful images or messages by using cell phones

and computer sites to humiliate and bash one another 24 hours a day (Laursen, 2011).

Bullies in schools have turned to these technological means to harass their victims

instantaneously at any time of the day or night and have worldwide dissemination

(Laursen, 2011).

  In the computer age that exists with students' uncanny ability to function in the

electronic age, it is not surprising that the level of violence in public schools is increasing

(Lunenburg, 2011). Unfortunately, as students' learn to become 21st century learners,

their ability to use those same skills and hurt other has grown. Violence in schools cannot

be separated from the larger problem that exists from violence in the communities they

live (Lunenburg, 2011). With the school shootings that have occurred as recently as 2013,

a tougher stance for gun control and teaching students how to deal with their anger has

become a high priority for many states and the nation as a whole. Very tough measures

are now in place in most states for dealing with violent behavior and these measures are

especially hard on those who use weapons as a means to commit violent acts (Lunenburg,

2011).

  The increase of school shootings, which occurred in the 1990s, focused the

nation's attention on school safety and school safety movements (Hurford et al., 2010).

The school shootings at Columbine High School shook the nation to its core and made

schools boards and school officials stop and look at just how safe their schools were. Due

to the increase in school violence, the national focus on bullying and behavior that can lead to violence in schools became greater (Hurford et al., 2010). Part of improving a schools' climate or culture is helping students find a sense of belonging through positive student/teacher relationships and a shift in educational practices for many schools.

Blosnich and Bossarte (2011) suggested that the mediating and/or moderating roles of non-bullying violent behaviors should be explored as a means to make our school safe. Studies exist that also suggest that severely victimized or bullied respondents should not be included since students who experience intense victimization are more likely to drop out of or be truant from school than others. Blosnich and Bossarte (2011) found that school safety measures that only having adults in hallways resulted in a significant reduction in the odds of being physically bullied. It was also proven that having property vandalized or having rumors spread for most students affected how students and staff behaved. The degree of victimization and having adults and/or staff supervising hallways was associated with a decrease in students experiencing additional forms of peer victimization at their schools (Armstrong, 2011). Furthermore, studies have shown that students reported feeling a greater sense of security knowing that teachers were looking out for them (Hurford et al., 2010). The feelings that both students and teachers experience regarding school safety drastically influence the school climate and culture that may or may not exist.

Public school safety measures. School shootings and violence in schools have caused a great concern for increased school safety measures in public schools across the country. Just as recently as one year ago, a school shooting took place in a small rural town in Connecticut, showing the vulnerability of school children while at school. In

their study, Shelton et al. (2009) wanted to compare and contrast the association of school

safety and their geographic region using thirteen-school safety measures to guide their

study. The survey included 1052 public schools representing approximately 16,000

across the country. Every part of the country has similar safety concerns that are common

amongst each individual school and at the same time have concerns that are unique to

their own school. In an effort to combat these safety issues, many schools are turning to

schoolwide programs where every staff member follows the same approach to changing

unsafe and undesirable student behavior.

Shelton et al. (2009) found that differences in geographic regions also affect

prevalent security measures at schools. Their study also provided data that proved that the

schools located in the western region had a greater emphasis on fire safety measures

along with facility safety measures in the form of fencing around the entire school and

exterior lighting, which affected school safety measures. It was also concluded that

schools in the West have lower reports of visitation supervision. While most schools

across the country now have their visitors sign in when arriving on a school campus,

Shelton et al. (2009) found that less than half of the schools surveyed had a reported sign-

in policy for visitors, and even fewer had an adult to direct guests to sign in. Another

significant finding from their study noted that fewer schools in the West had metal

detectors compared to the schools in any other region in the country (Shelton et al.,

2009).

Due to the increase in school violence, most schools have turned their attention to

thorough prevention and preparedness to reduce safety risks and liability. Schools have

safety measures, policies, and programs that have been implemented to decrease the risks

of school violence on their campus. Often times, school administrators work with their faculty, staff, and students to take steps to improve participation in programs and adherence to the policies rather than reacting when a violent event occurs. Recent school safety studies have shown that perceptions of school safety may have a greater impact on students than those concrete examples that have occurred at other schools (Bosworth et al., 2011). Schoolwide behavior plans such as PBIS have been known to be effective in improving school safety issues for many schools (PBIS.org).

School leaders have found that extending participation in school safety measures that would involve various segments of the community may also prove beneficial (Shelton et al., 2009). Community and business leaders, service organizations, governmental officials, and law enforcement personnel may also be used in an effort to provide resources and services not readily available at the schools (Armstrong, 2011). Many schools now have law enforcement officers that are a permanent part of their school campuses in an effort to make their campuses safe. Many schools are now able to make this possible through safety grants that exist, especially in schools where violence in the community is more frequent.

Through the efforts of their study, Shelton et al. (2009) determined that the objectives of the review of present school safety procedures could also provide and maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all students. Since students' perceptions of their own safety directly influences student learning, many schools have taken more drastic measures to keep their students safe. Security cameras that monitor school campuses, fencing and gates that remain locked during the school day, and even

locking classroom doors are all strategies that are now employed by many schools across the country (Armstrong, 2011).

Because safety or the feeling of being safe lies in the eyes of the beholder, schools now focus on three categories regarding school safety. The first category is identified as physical characteristic and safety features. The tangible and visible items located around the school such as locked gates and security cameras (Bosworth et al., 2011). The second category is described as organization and school discipline. These are the things that are put in place to create an orderly environment, such as schoolwide behavioral plans and classroom expectations (Bosworth at al., 2011). The third category is defined as school safety and relationships, which are the things that enhance feelings of safety and promote a sense of caring and community (Bosworth et al., 2011). Those very real feelings or perceptions that both students and teachers have about their school are what make up the overall school climate that exists.

Positive behavior supports. Researchers have begun to examine the interpersonal experiences of adolescents by integrating intrapersonal focuses with current motivational research compared to the interpersonal reliability of schooling (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Most students in society generally have an innate desire to do the right thing, but often lack the motivation to do so (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). PBIS are being used as the means to change students' behavior in many schools today (Moore, 2011). Lane et al. (2009) explored the possibility that evidence exist for the reliability and structure of a primary intervention rating scale with the implementation of PBIS.

The criteria for evaluating behavioral support programs are changing every year (Miramontes et al., 2011). The increased pressure put on students to be academically

successful in school has added to stress levels of students that do not know how to deal with that stress. The absence of effective preventative behavioral strategies in schools causes most schools to rely on punitive practices such as discipline referrals, school suspensions, and sometimes even expulsions to create a safer school environment (Oswald et al., 2005). While having students removed from school creates some relief for teachers and administrators, this does not teach students' how to behave properly in school. PBIS take a different approach to student behavior plans that once may have been in existence. Instead of focusing on the negative behaviors that student's exhibit, PBIS strategies focus on rewarding desirable student behaviors through rewards and praise.

To test the effectiveness of PBIS, Lane et al. (2009) sampled 617 teachers representing 11 elementary, three middle, and five high schools in Tennessee. These teachers' participated in a yearlong training series designed to construct a three-tiered model of positive behavior support. The teachers' chosen for the study were predominantly female, with a little more than half having earned their educational degrees beyond the bachelor's degree. The majority of the teachers in their study were general educators and had earned the majority of their teaching credentials. Demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and years of experience may also influence how teachers perceive school climate.

The 19 schools that were chosen for their study participated in a yearlong training series in positive behavior support (PBS) that was conducted at Vanderbilt University (Lane et al., 2009). The criteria for participation required each school to establish a PBIS team that included an administrator with decision-making authority, two general education teachers, a special education teacher, a parent, and a student. The task given to

each team was to attend the PBIS training series in an effort to design a plan containing

primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention for their students (Lane et al., 2009).

PBIS, as part of the design process, require that each team received input on the primary

prevention component of the schoolwide plan. Pre-implementation required that the PBIS

leadership team present an overview of the proposed PBIS plan during a regularly

scheduled faculty meeting so that all teachers understood what was expected (Lane et al.,

2009). This study may serve as an example for other schools that desire successful

implementation of PBIS and supports the literature that exists on the positive impacts for

students.

      PBIS outline eight key features of the program that must be considered if

sustainability of the program is desired (Coffey & Horner, 2012). These key features are:

a) A contextually appropriate innovation: Innovation that is aligned with national

    and state standards serves as a strong model for implementation.

b) Staff buy-in: PBIS recommends that at least 80% of the entire staff be in

    agreement with using the program before a school moves to implementation.

c) A shared vision: There must be an agreement between school personnel regarding

    the core components of the innovation, what the core components look like, and

    what teachers desire to see as the outcomes from the innovation.

d) Administrative support: This is the most critical component to successful

    implementation. Unless the administration supports the efforts of the group and

    believes in the program, the program will not be sustained.

e) Leadership at various levels: While administrative support is critical, it is also

    important to have leadership from a team of key personnel as the internal leaders

of the program.

f) Ongoing technical support: The program will only improve if efforts are made to understand what is taking place and the understanding to be able to improve practices after implementation.

g) Data-based decision making: Data must be collected throughout the process and be analyzed and shared with the entire staff in an effort to provide corrective feedback and increase both short and long-term commitment.

h) Continuous regeneration: This final piece requires that a set of procedures be put in place to create a system to compare outcomes again current practices and modify those practices over time (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

PBIS is a system of change methodology that will minimize individual student behavior, increase their quality of life, and improve their academic success (Coffey & Horner, 2012). The benefits of PBIS can be seen in students' and teachers' alike. Teachers in a PBIS school tend to feel more responsible for each individual student in the school and genuinely want to help students improve both behaviorally and academically (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Warren et al. (2006) described PBIS as the schoolwide application of positive behavior supports in a prevention-oriented approach to deal with student discipline that is characterized by defining teaching and defining behavioral expectations, rewarding appropriate student behavior, continual evaluation for effectiveness, and the integration of supports for individual students by the school as a whole.

In the conclusion of their study, Lane et al. (2009) found that in each of the three exploratory factor analyses conducted using squared multiple correlations as prior

commonality estimates, there was one factor retained for the elementary, middle, and high school version of the PBIS, as determined using the screen plot. It was also determined that at the elementary school level, based on 329 elementary teacher ratings representing eleven elementary schools prior to onset of a schoolwide PBIS program, there were a range in variables that effected consistent outcomes (Lane et al., 2009). At the middle school level, Lane et al. (2009) determined that based on 86 middle school teacher ratings representing three middle schools prior to onset of a schoolwide PBIS program, the range in variables was more closely aligned based on the implementation stage the school was in. Finally, at the high school level, 202 high school teacher ratings representing five high schools prior to onset of a schoolwide PBIS program (Lane et al. (2009). PBIS has been used as an effective means for reducing behavior issues and increasing the academic success for students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels through various studies. What is still unknown is whether there is any benefit for the teachers who are responsible for overseeing the program and making it work.

Team decision making. In schools across the country, many schools have moved away from the top down or dictator type leadership and have moved towards decision-making by all members of the educational team. Algozzine, Newton, Horner, Todd, and Algozzine (2012) investigated the possibility of a correlation between failure to implement problem-solving processes with fidelity and resolutions to behavior problems. According to their study, it was determined that when both schoolwide PBIS and the schoolwide information were in existence team decision-making became a norm for those schools.

As a part of educational reform efforts, many school districts have turned to decentralizing school management and have moved to individual campuses making site-based decisions for their schools (Noel, Slate, Brown, & Tejeda-Delgado, 2008). In this model, many of the decisions that were normally made at the district level have been delegated to school principals. This process requires that school boards and district offices turn over their control of decisions regarding curriculum and school operation to the local school (Noel et al., 2008). To accomplish this task of making school decisions as an individual organization, school principals' have recruited teachers, parents, and community members to assist them in making sound decisions. One of those decisions that historically had been the responsibility of individual schools is to determine how they will handle students' behavior issues. While many schools have a discipline matrix that outlines the consequences that may exist for students who violate school policies, schoolwide behavior plans are often left to the school itself. PBIS is one of the many schoolwide behavior programs that schools are turning to in an effort to manage student behavior.

The trend towards a more strategic approach to school management has led to schools using restructuring activities that focus on making sound decisions as a group (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008). These strategies have caused school leaders to move away from traditional roles of teachers and to create groups of teachers who have become the school leaders. In many cases, a two-level, top-tiered structure has become the norm, with a smaller inner group taking responsibility for day-to-day decisions (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008). In a typical high school setting, these inner groups are identified as department chairs or department leaders who become the voice of their individual

departments when making decisions at the school level. When considering a schoolwide behavior plan at the high school level, it is imperative that the school principal have buy in from the school's department chairs before considering moving forward with its implementation.

Participation in decision-making roles by teachers is conceived as an aspect of shared leadership when making decisions at the school level (Kipkoech & Chesire, 2011). With the added pressure that has been placed on teachers to perform in the classroom, it is important that teachers feel like their voice has been heard in the decision making process. The literature that exists regarding participative decision-making has focused primarily on teachers and teachers' viewpoints in the decision-making process (Kipkoech & Chesire, 2011). Since teachers are greatly affected by most decisions made at schools, research has been done to determine how those decisions affect teachers directly. One of the reasons behind involving teachers in participative decision-making is to improve the overall quality of decisions that an individual school makes and to improve the overall effectiveness of that school (Kipkoech & Chesire, 2011).

The problem that can exist when choosing to use a team decision-making process is that the appointed leaders must be able to exhibit all of the qualities that a school leader demonstrates (Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport, & Bergman, 2012). Teachers who are selected to become school leaders must be able to put aside friendships with their colleagues and make decisions that are best for the entire school. These teachers must emerge as the leaders that are needed, when the skills, knowledge, and expertise can benefit the team (Bergman et al., 2012). In a school that decides to move to a schoolwide behavioral plan, the team decision-making process will greatly increase the chances that

buy-in by the teacher will take place. Algozzine et al. (2012) concluded that to actually

benefit from the problem-solving processes, research must be conducted within the

context of using rigorous experimental designs to assess the possible functional

relationships between a team's implementation of problem-solving processes with fidelity

and resolution of student problems. Staff buy-in is the key component that must exist

when deciding to use a schoolwide behavior plan on a school campus. Unless there is at

least 80 % staff buy-in, the program will fail. In order for the program to benefit students,

all teachers must be willing to implement and follow the program as it is designed.

Discipline referrals. School leaders and staff members are held responsible for

ensuring safe learning environments where all students can learn appropriate academic

and social skills (Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004). To accomplish this

task, school leaders and school personnel have turned to writing referrals and sending

disruptive students to the office for more harsh punishments. With the increase of school

violence, it seems that those discipline referrals have changed and become even more

prescriptive than in the past. Because students' generally lack social responsibility when

acting out and demonstrating disruptive behaviors, discipline referrals are issued. Social

responsibility is the ability for students to demonstrate themselves as a cooperative and

contributive member of society (Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, 2012). Teachers have

the ability to both choose from a predefined list of offenses as well as give a narrative of

behavior issues a student is having.

While exploring the impact of Positive Behavior Supports in an effort to decrease

discipline referrals with elementary students, Sherrod, Getch, and Ziomek-Daigle (2009)

explored the impact of Positive Behavior Supports as a means to decreases discipline

referrals for students. PBIS take a different approach to student discipline by focusing on

the desirable student behaviors through recognition and rewards. Schoolwide Positive

Behavior Supports or SWPBIS focuses on changing the environment to better meet the

needs of all students through a comprehensive and proactive approach that the entire

faculty agrees upon (Clonan, McDougal, Clark, & Davison, 2007). PBIS allows school

faculty the ability to track student behaviors through the use of discipline referrals to

determine what types of behaviors are occurring, where they are occurring, and when

they occur throughout the school day. This type of schoolwide intervention included

lessons that were taught to every student by their homeroom teachers (Sherrod et al.,

2009).

The lessons that were being taught were created by a team of teachers who

desired to see changes in student behavior and focused on teaching the students the

schoolwide rules and expectations. Posters were placed throughout the school to

encourage the students to follow the rules taught in the classroom (Sherrod et al., 2009).

When expectations are clear for students and are posted in every location they walk

through each day, the better the chances are they will be able to meet those expectations

and improve the school climate. Research exists that demonstrates a connection between

academic achievement and the impact that achievement has on student misbehaviors

(Garrett, Antrop-Gonzalez, & Velez, 2010).

Traditionally, office discipline referrals have been defined as classroom or school

events in which teachers or staff observes a student violating a school rule and then

submits documentation to the administration who then delivers a consequence to that

student (Pas, Bradshaw, & Mitchell, 2011). This type of discipline has been widely used

and is the norm in the public school setting, although many have question whether or not this type of practice actually changes student behavior. In order to monitor such student behavior problems and the impact on each school, interventions have increasingly used discipline referral data; however, there is limited research that exists that can validate their use (Pas et al., 2011). Sherrod et al. (2009) found positive results where other variables may have contributed to the decrease in discipline referrals.

There is research that exists suggesting that classroom or school factors that influence student behavior may also increase the risk of a student receiving an office discipline referral (Pas et al., 2011). Teachers are individuals who have different rules and tolerances for student behavior. Inconsistent implementation of classroom rules, overall classroom management ability, and classroom disruptions can all result in the writing of office referrals (Pas et al., 2011). When students do not understand what is expected of them or when those expectations differ from teacher to teacher, students often become frustrated and demonstrate impulsive or disruptive behaviors. Impulse control or the ability to resist or delay a temptation to act out often leads to the issuance of discipline referrals (Sparkman et al., 2012). Repeated referrals, suspensions from school, and expulsions have resulted in students' lost time from classrooms, disengagement, and even alienation that can result in a negative school climate (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012).

In many high schools across the country, the assistant principal is the one who handles office referrals and initiates school consequences for inappropriate student behavior. Changes in school administration can also affect discipline referrals and how they are handled. In a study, the former assistant principal of a school was promoted to

principal at another school and a new assistant principal was introduced (Sherrod et al.,

2009). The change in the assistant principal is important because in the participating

school he or she handles a majority of discipline issues. The assistant principal also

decides whether the discipline referral should be processed and entered into the student

information system as well as the consequence to be given. Therefore, a change in

leadership that results in a change of ideas about managing discipline may also contribute

to the number of discipline referrals that are reported (Sherrod et al., 2009). School

discipline is no different from any other school initiative and relies on the school

leadership to support the methods put in place to succeed. Change in leadership is one of

the biggest factors that can lead to a change in school culture since the school leader

impacts the school operations. What types of student behaviors will be tolerated and

those that will not are driven by the school leadership team and impact the entire school

campus.

   School climate. School climate is a multidimensional construct that exists but

cannot be captured by any specific indicator or global measure (Gregory et al., 2012).

Schools are institutions in which students, teachers, administrators, and service personnel

exist socially (Gunbayi, 2007). The climate of any school is created through many

different subgroups that exist within the same educational organization. Climate can be

defined as the factors that influence the attitudes, beliefs, and values that motivate people

working within that organization (Gunbayi, 2007). Zhang and Liu (2010) investigated the

characteristics of organizational climate and its effects on the organizational variables.

The variables that exist within a school culture can change the school climate both

positively and negatively based on human interactions of the people who exist within the organization (Wynn et al., 2007).

Organizational climate describes the members' perceptions of the environment in which they work (Zhang & Liu, 2010). In a school environment, there are relationships that exist amongst the sub-groups of individuals that play a role in how people feel about the climate in which these relationships exist. Teachers in an educational environment have a variety of obligations that they must meet in their profession (Shurden, Santandreu, & Shurden, 2010). Those obligations go way beyond delivering instruction and evaluating the performance of students. Teachers must ensure that the individual needs of each student whom they teach have their individual needs met as a learner. In order to accomplish this task, teachers must seek to get to know their students as individuals. Having a positive school climate for both students and teachers is indicative of how well that organization is reaching its full potential (Gunbayi, 2007). Part of achieving the positive school climate that is necessary for students' success requires the involvement of parents. Parental involvement in school continues to be one of the critical issues for all stakeholders in the nation's education system (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013).

As the organizational leader of a school, the school principal plays a significant role in creating the climate of their school (Marler, McKee, Cox, Simmering, & Allen, 2012). Several studies have demonstrated the crucial influence on school culture as well as the way that teachers perceive their school culture (Engels et al., 2008). Principals as school leaders have a great deal of responsibility in finding the balance between identifying teachers and students needs and meeting those needs in an educational environment. The structure and quality of any school environment plays a critical role in

the school's ability to provide educational opportunities for their students (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013). If principals are to establish a positive school climate, then the perceptions of both students and teachers alike must be positive in nature. Principals hold a very important position in their school and it is therefore essential that they function well within that environment (Engels et al., 2008). All educational initiatives that determine how a school will do business and how they will educate their students start with the principal. Principals are the instructional leaders on their campuses and therefore can have the biggest impact on the overall campus base on what they do and do not support.

In the world of education that exists, school climate is often defined by the ability of the collective group of teachers to work as a team within the organization (Wynn et al., 2007). Teachers who can engage collaboratively often struggle with questions regarding their work, how to share power, and how to validate their process (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013; Marler et al., 2012). In a school setting where a collaborative effort is used to implement a schoolwide behavioral program, all teachers must agree on the guiding principles of the program and be willing to hold true to the defining principles. Kasnitz et al. (2009) found that creating and sustaining a positive school climate would not be possible unless that school had intentional structures and supports to sustain it (as cited by Rhodes et al., 2011).

This type of collaborative effort makes it possible for a schoolwide behavioral plan to not only be effective, but to change the climate on a school campus. Over the past 30 years, there has been an increasing number of studies examining school climate in American schools (Yang et al., 2013). When teachers understand the benefits to the entire

school by collaboratively working to improve student behaviors, they are more likely to put out the effort necessary to make it happen. Having these structures in place will make it possible for principals and teachers to meet regularly, participate in shared-decision making, learn together, and work closely with students on their campus (Rhodes et al., 2011). This study attempted to understand the phenomenon that exists between PBIS as a schoolwide behavior plan for students and its influence on teachers' perceptions of their school climate.

Summary

This qualitative dissertation explored the influence of PBIS on teachers' perceptions of their school climate through the interpretive approach. Building a rich interpretive study requires that the research utilize multiple sources of literature and research data to support the research being conducted (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The literature review provides the background for this study and was explained through subtopics throughout the literature review.

The NCLB Act of 2001 focused the nation's attention on the needs of all students and does not allow schools to differentiate their efforts based on socioeconomic status or any other demographic factor (NCLB, 2002). This act has caused shifts in how schools go about hiring teachers and the qualities those teachers possess. The NCLB legislation requires that schools employ highly qualified teachers that will teach students through researched-based instructional practices (NCLB, 2002). The challenge schools face in meeting these requirements is to find a balance between academic success and helping students to find a sense of belonging to their school.

The increase of school violence in the past decade has added even more pressure to educators. Not only do schools have to provide a place where all students can learn, they need to ensure that they are academically successful while providing a safe and secure school environment. Teachers' concerns about discipline issues and the possibility of violence in public schools has resulted in greater efforts to find more effective ways to keep schools safe (Hoyle et al., 2011). If students are going to overcome educational challenges in school, they must be able to feel safe at school and be free of distractions that prevent learning. In an effort to accomplish this great task, schools are turning to schoolwide behavioral plans to provide a positive school environment where discipline problems decrease and academic success can improve (Hoyle et al., 2011).

High school students can feel some of the same pressures that the teachers who teach them feel on a daily basis. Since there is such a great deal of pressure on high school students to be academically successful in high school, school administrators must ensure that students find a sense of belonging so that they can be successful. School climate is described as the feeling that teachers and students have about their school and the student-teacher relationships that exists (Gunbayi, 2007). Schoolwide behavior plans are effective in changing problem behaviors on a school campus only if the efforts of the faculty and staff are collaborative in nature. The way students behave at school can have a significant impact on how teachers feel about their school climate.

Before implementation of any schoolwide behavior plan on a school campus, several factors must be considered. School safety factors that contribute to the climate and culture of schools have been a topic of study for the past 30 years or more (Shelton et al., 2009). Feelings about school safety and school climate are perceived notions that are

experienced by teachers and students alike. Students who perceive their school to be unsafe may have fears which can produce their own set of consequences that can affect a student's ability to learn (Lawrence, 2006). The degree of safety that students feel at school is largely influenced by school violence, especially as much as this violence has portrayed in the media. Lunenburg (2010) stated that there is a trend of growing violence that includes bullying and chaos in the classroom that has become a reality for many students.

Public school safety measures have been drastically increased over time due to the school shootings that have taken place. School leaders have found that by extending participation in school safety measures that would involve a segment of the community may also be beneficial to schools (Shelton et al., 2009). In an effort to create a safe school environment, physical characteristics and safety features, organization, and school discipline as well as school safety and relationships must be considered (Bosworth et al., 2011). Schoolwide behavioral plans are just one of those measures that have been used to improve school safety.

PBIS have demonstrated that the use of evidence-based practices that are uniformly administered can be an effective means of changing student behavior (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Before the implementation stage of PBIS can begin, it is important that all faculty members agree to program expectations and are willing to fully support the program. Team decision-making is a strategic approach to school management that uses restructuring activities that focus on making sound decisions as a group (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008). PBIS uses information that can be tracked through student discipline referrals to understand the types of behaviors that exist and where they are happening.

Discipline referrals exist because schools and staff are held responsible for ensuring a safe learning environment where all students can learn appropriate academic and social skills (Irvin et al., 2004).

Positive behavior interventions are used as a means to improve student behavior and school climate. Climate can be defined as the factors that influence the attitudes, beliefs, and values that motivate people whom work within the organization (Gunbayi, 2007). The feeling or perceptions that students and teachers feel can be different or very much the same. The research involved exploring the phenomena of how PBIS provide benefits to students, but it is unclear whether those benefits impact the teachers themselves. This study explored the underlying benefits surrounding the use of PBIS for teachers who implement and enforce the expectations that surround it (Barnett, 2012).

In order to determine the influence PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of school climate, this qualitative interpretive study explored the perspectives of teachers through the transformative learning theory. The transformative learning theory employs two major elements of transformative learning, which are critical reflection and critical self-reflection (Kitchenham, 2008). The research question that guided this study asked what teachers' perceptions were regarding the influence that PBIS have had on a high school climate. The phenomena being studied were PBIS and their influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate on a high school campus. While PBIS has successfully affected and influenced students in a positive way, it is not known whether there is a relationship between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of school climate. In order to attempt to maximize the results of self-perception of school climate, Wagstaff and Williams (2014) recommended an qualitative interpretive study. To determine teachers'

self-perception on school climate and the influence PBIS plays on those perceptions, teachers were interviewed in their own natural setting.

In Wagstaff and Williams's (2014) study, they suggested that a qualitative interpretive study is the best approach to facilitate exploration of a phenomenon within its context to understand participants' interpretations of their own experiences. Cherry (2010) also suggested that the ability to increase teacher effectiveness may be a direct result of the teachers' ability to analyze their own self-perceptions. This study expands on the existing body of knowledge surrounding school safety, the school environment, student connectivity, and the need for schoolwide behavior interventions and supports to improve school climate (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Furthermore, this study expands on previous claims that PBIS improve student academic success leading to a more positive school climate.

Through a qualitative interpretive study, teachers provided their perceptions of possible influence of PBIS through a PBIS teacher questionnaire and open-ended interview questions. An attempt to understand how and why PBIS may influence teachers' perceptions of school climate demonstrate the advantages of using an qualitative interpretive study. Conducting a qualitative interpretive study over a quantitative study allowed teachers to share their individual perspectives and thoughts regarding school climate. Most importantly, through an interpretive study, teachers were able to share their personal beliefs about the PBIS initiative and what influence they perceive that program to have on their school climate. The transformative learning theory suggests that when a frame of reference provides information when dealing with a new situation or challenge that is faced, it is considered an appropriate means for the

researcher (Kitchenham, 2008). This study attempted to identify the benefits that may exist of PBIS through the transformative learning theory for the teachers who implement and enforce student expectations.

The literature review in this chapter supports the rationale for the methodology that was used in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 will include an introduction to the methodology chosen for this study, identify the problem that was researched, and identify the research question to be used, define the research methodology, identify the research design, and identify the population and sample selection for the study. Sources of data were identified, the rationale for validity and reliability is provided, the data collection and analysis procedures are outlined, the ethical considerations that were used for this study are mentioned, and the limitations that existed when the study was complete.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The participant high school in Southern Arizona began implemented PBIS in their

school nine years ago in an attempt to reduce student behavior referrals and improve

academic success on their campus. Over the past six years of continuous school efforts to

teach students what is expected of them in every school environment they encounter, the

participant high school has collected student referral data that demonstrates not only

improved student behavior, but also that they have reduced students referrals by more

than 40% since the 2010/11 school year. As the teaching staff, school administration, and

support staff of the school united their efforts to improve the school climate for all

students on their campus, they have also been able to reduce classroom disruptions that

they had not anticipated would come from their efforts.

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how PBIS

influence high school teachers' perceptions on school climate within a participant school

located in Southern Arizona. The phenomena being studied was PBIS and its influence

on teachers' perceptions of school climate. While PBIS has been noted to impact and

influence students in a positive ways, it is not known if there is any relationship between

PBIS and teachers' perceptions of the school climate.

This study identified teachers' beliefs regarding the influence the PBIS initiative

has had on teachers' perceptions of school climate. This study also focused on differences

or similarities of teachers and teachers to see if there are any differences in teachers'

perceptions of school climate based on a comparison of interview responses from the

seven teachers and the responses to the PBIS questionnaire from the general teaching

staff. Teachers for this study completed a five question demographic survey and respond to four interview questions in an effort to understand teachers' thoughts, feelings, and self-perceptions of PBIS and the influence it may also have on their current school climate.

The rest of this chapter is outlined in sub-sections to further explain the statement of the problem being studied and introduce the research question that guided this study. The research methodology as well as research design are explained and defended in this chapter. This chapter will define the population being studied and the sources of data were used to gather information for this study. Validity and reliability measures for this study will be discussed as well as the data collections procedures and data analysis procedures that were used in this study. Finally, the ethical considerations used for this study will be discussed and limitations found from this study will be defined.

Statement of the Problem

It is not known how PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions on school climate. The NCLB Act of 2001 focused its attention on meeting the needs of all students regardless of socioeconomic status (NCLB, 2002). With the current mandate coming to an end in 2014, and with the implementation of new federally regulated standards, there is now more added pressure on students and teachers alike than ever before. Teachers must be able to produce high academic achievement scores regardless of the students they teach.

PBIS have been reported to be very successful in helping teachers achieve expected academic results. If students are going to overcome the educational challenges they face, then teachers must be able to work in an environment free from distractions

that would interfere with their ability to teach. In order for teachers to provide the quality of education that they are expected to provide, they must have a positive perception of the environment in which they work (Hoyle et al., 2011).

Research Question

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research methodology were all considered as possible approaches to answer the research question for this study. Since this study did not intend to use numeric statistical analysis or to quantitatively hypothesize or investigate relationships between variables, quantitative and mixed methods approaches were not selected (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Hopkins, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lauer, 2006; Mertens, 2010). Instead, the focus of this study was to understand the phenomenon that exists between the PBIS initiative and teachers' perceptions of school climate through personal interviews in the teachers own natural environment, which best fits qualitative methodology. Qualitative interpretive research allows for the examination of teachers in their own natural setting. Through qualitative research, it is possible to better understand human conduct rather than a line of argument by seeking to understand the feelings of those being studied (Mus, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Furthermore, qualitative research is based on the experiences of individuals involved and seeks to understand the phenomenon that exists (Yin, 2013).

This qualitative interpretive attempted to answer the following research question: How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high school teachers' perception of school climate? Semi-structure interviews were conducted with teachers from the participant high school to gather information about the thoughts and

feelings of seven purposefully selected teachers regarding PBIS and their own school climate. The interview consisted of four open-ended questions in relation to PBIS and school climate. Interviews were both audio recorded and transcribed to ensure information was accurately presented. Data collected were coded to find themes and descriptions that may exist.

This study also identified whether differences existed in teachers' perceptions of school climate based on responses from the teachers of this study and responses from the general teaching staff. Demographical data were collected and arranged to find similarities and differences in years of experience, years of experience at the current school, and educational background that exist amongst the participant being used. Only those teachers that have taught at the school for the past four to six years were used for this study and a purposeful sample was selected for the semi-structured interview based on the number of years they have been involved with PBIS at the participant high school. The phenomena being studied was PBIS and its influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate on a high school campus. While PBIS has been known to impact and influence students in positive ways, it is not known if there is any relationship between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of the school climate.

Research Methodology

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methodologies have been discussed by multiple authors and all have their own unique purpose, depending on research design (Merriam 2009; Roberts, 2013; Hopkins, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lauer, 2006; Mertens, 2010). Generally speaking, a quantitative approach is best used when the study involves statistical calculations that are derived from data collected

(Johnson & Christensen, 2102; Hopkins, 2002). The quantitative process also suggests that the research generate more than one hypothesis that was compared through research design that examines relationships between variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Qualitative research design on the other hand is designed for determining reasons behind relationships that exist from a single behavior or from multiple behaviors of a targeted individual or group (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). A qualitative approach is used in the social and behavioral science field and best fits when the researcher intends to interview, observe, or have personal interactions with the teachers being studied (Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006). A mixed-methods approach uses both numerical and textual data that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to perform research (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Lauer, 2006). Because this researcher desired to interview teachers in their own natural environment in an effort to understand the relationship that exists between the PBIS initiative and teacher perceptions, the qualitative design was the best for this study.

In their research, *Assessing Social validity of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Plans*, Lane et al. (2009) used qualitative methodology to provide evidence for the reliability and structure of the primary intervention rating scale. While this methodology provided statistical analysis of teacher characteristics and survey items, it was unable to provide teacher's personal feeling on the matter. In their study, *Integrating wraparound into schoolwide system of Positive Behavior Supports*, Eber et al. (2011) used a qualitative approach. By using a qualitative approach, the authors were able to understand how wraparound can be implemented successfully in schools to meet the needs of emotional and behavior-challenged students. Through face-to-face interviews

and conversations, the researchers were able to gather personal thoughts and feelings

from their teachers. While there have been both quantitative and qualitative studies done

on school safety, school violence, and students' behavioral issues in the past, it is through

the insights gained from an qualitative interpretive study that this researcher sought to

understand the benefits of a schoolwide behavior plan on the school climate of a specific

school (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Interpretive study methodology

ensures that the issue is explored not only through one lens, but also through multiple

lenses, which allows participants to make sense of their own social world and of a

phenomenon to be understood (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014; Lauer, 2006).

In order to validate the qualitative interpretive design that was used in this study,

Snelgrove's (2014) study, *Conducting qualitative longitudinal research using

interpretative phenomenological analysis*, was examined. In his study the author draws

on the experiences of managing interpretive analysis while undertaking IPA patients.

Evidence was provided from the author's literature review originating from possible

qualitative interpretive designs. Through his analysis of possible qualitative designs and

data, collection methods were examined to demonstrate their effectiveness. The results

from the author's findings demonstrated that a qualitative interpretive study approach is a

valid research methodology when the researcher intended to understand participants'

interpretations of their school environment and interact with teachers in their own natural

environment (Larkin et al., 2006).

According to Wagstaff and Williams (2014), a qualitative interpretive study

methodology provides researchers the tools to study participants' interpretations within

their natural contexts. A qualitative interpretive study research design was used to

understand the influence of the PBIS and their influence on teacher perceptions of school climate in their own natural environment. A qualitative research design approach is used when a researcher needs a clear picture of the phenomenon being studied and the questions they want to investigate as well as clarifying how a researcher is going to conduct the study (Klopper, 2008). Qualitative research examines individuals or phenomenon within a natural setting (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Focusing on natural settings of teachers while interpreting the influence that PBIS has on teacher perceptions of school climate, a qualitative interpretive study is best suited as the methodology for this study based on the characteristics of qualitative design (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). According to Merriam (2009), in qualitative research the researcher tends to collect data at the site where teachers experience the issue or problem being studied. Interviewing teachers in their own natural environment using an interpretive approach allowed the researcher to better determine if teacher perceptions are based on individual thoughts and feelings. A qualitative interpretive study design allowed the researcher to use interpretive inquiry to understand what teachers are feeling.

Other research designs were examined and considered for this study but were not chosen. The quantitative research design is used when the researcher intends to investigate relationships between two variables and use statistical analysis to numerically explain data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Because this research sought to understand actual thoughts and feeling of the teachers, a quantitative or mixed methods approach that uses statistical analysis would not be effective. While qualitative research design is used when the researcher seeks to interact personally through interviews or

observations to try and understand the relationship that exists of a single behavior or series of behaviors, there are several other qualitative strategies to be considered (Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006). Ethnography research is a strategy in which the researcher studies and interacts with an individual or group in their natural setting over a prolonged period. Because this research involves trying to understand if an influence exists between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of school climate at the current time based on teacher's experiences, an ethnographical approach would be less effective.

Grounded theory is a qualitative approach in which the researcher used data that has been collected to formulate a theory that has been derived from the views of the teachers (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013). Since this study sought to understand the depth of a schoolwide student behavioral program at a single school, grounded theory was not selected. Narrative research focuses on the lives of individuals and asks individuals to provide stories about their lives (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Mertens, 2010). Because this study focused on the effects of PBIS on teacher perceptions of school climate a narrative approach would not be effective.

A qualitative interpretive study design was chosen to better understand whether PBIS has any influence on teachers' perception of school climate on a high school campus, by teachers in their own natural environment. A qualitative interpretive study was used to answer the research question and semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers at the participant high school in Southern Arizona. Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to interact with teachers in their own environment. Since this study intended to interpret the influence of one phenomenon to another, face-to-face interviews that allowed teachers to elaborate were the best approach. A series of four

open-ended questions that have been approved by a panel of experts for validity and

readability were be used to interview seven purposefully selected teachers for this study.

Five demographical survey questions were given to all teachers to provide background

information assist in purposeful selection of teachers. Data collected from the seven

teacher teachers were compared to the data collected from the PBIS teacher questionnaire

given to all teachers in this study were used for analysis. The interviews conducted

provided the researcher historical information and allowed the researcher to control the

line of questioning (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

The participant high school has had PBIS in place on their campus for nine years

and has seen positive results from its existence. Irrespective of the specific policy being

implemented, the overall purpose of any educational reform is to improve a school in

terms of student achievement, the teaching and learning environment, and overall school

management (Kim, 2011). Since student behavior referrals have been reported to be

reduced by more than 50% and students are now more actively involved in their school,

this study sought to understand the teachers' perceptions at the participant high school

regarding their outlook on their school climate.

Research Design

While qualitative research seeks to find or explain the causes of changes in social

facts through objective measurement and analysis, quantitative research seeks to study a

phenomenon to quantify participant responses and interpret those responses (Arghode,

2012). Quantitative research is based on the positivist paradigm that uses numeric data

that has been statistically analyzed; qualitative research is based on the phenomenological

or interpretive paradigm and seeks to understand behaviors through personal interactions

(Merriam, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lauer, 2006; Mertens 2010). Based on the desire to understand individual behaviors through personal interactions with teachers, a qualitative research design has been selected for this research because the nature of this study best fits the characteristics of an interpretive model (Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006).

An interpretive study was chosen for this research because the research being conducted sought to establish the meaning of the phenomenon that has been establish through PBIS. The nature of the study lends itself to a qualitative interpretive study because the study examined the meaning of school climate based on the opinions of the teachers' in their natural setting (Merriam, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). In a quantitative research design, the researcher focuses on proving or disproving a hypothesis based on teachers' responses and uses statistical tools to analyze their data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Qualitative research design interpretations of the teachers being studied is recorded to better understand perceptions and develop and understanding of the phenomenon that exists (Arghode, 2012; Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006).

Unlike a quantitative approach that is completed by using numeric data and statistical analysis between variables as the approach to conduct research, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to design interview question specific to the phenomenon being studied and to use open-ended question to find out what the participant think and feel (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lauer, 2006; Mertens, 2010). Because this study is based on phenomenology and sought to determine the perceptions of teachers alone, this study was best accomplished through qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006).

A qualitative interpretive study was selected for this study in order to interact with teachers in their own school environment where they could be both interviewed and observed. A semi-structure interview approach along with demographical survey questions for teachers and a PBIS teacher survey were chosen because they best allowed for the discovery of whether or not PBIS has any impact on teachers' perceptions of school climate. The school being studied has had PBIS in place for six consecutive school years and PBIS has been a part of their school culture. This study identified whether or not a culture exists amongst a group of teachers through the qualitative design of open-ended questioning and conversations with teachers who have been on the school campus for at least three years (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006).

The teachers in this qualitative interpretive study were teachers who teach in a public high school in Southern Arizona. The teachers for this study have taught at the school being studied for a minimum of four to six years and have been a part of the implementation and sustainability of the PBIS initiative on this school campus. Teachers were purposefully selected as a cross section of the school and teach in the various content areas represented on the school campus. While race, gender, years of experience, number of years teaching, and years of education were asked of all teachers, those responses were not used to differentiate who participated in this study. Teachers in this study participated in a semi-structure interview process that asked four open-ended question of each participant. Participant responses from the interview questions were coded following the three step coding process (Merriam, 2009; Johnson & Christensen,

2012). Demographical survey data was also used to gather information on similarities and differences amongst the teachers based on their own personal backgrounds in education.

Population and Sample Selection

The population for this study was addressed and a descriptive account of those teachers chosen for this study was stated. All teachers were highly qualified under NCLB standards and certified teachers who work on the campus of the participant high school. All teachers on the participant campus were given the PBIS five demographical questions to answer as well as a PBIS teacher questionnaire. The PBIS teacher questionnaire and field notes from those teachers who participated and returned the demographic survey questions were reviewed. Criteria for participation was that each of the teachers chosen have worked on the participant high school campus for at least four to six consecutive years to ensure that they were familiar with PBIS and its impact on students. Based on this criterion, seven teachers were purposefully selected based on the number of years they have taught at the participant high school. The seven teachers were interviewed face-to-face to gather more personal perspectives of PBIS and school climate from the group of eligible teachers on that campus.

Teachers' for the study were selected through purposeful sampling and have all been teaching at the participant high school for at least four to six years and were part of the implementation of PBIS on that campus. Each participant received an informed consent form to voluntarily participate in the study. All risks and the benefits of participating in this study were shared. All teachers were made aware of the nature of the study and were given a copy that outlined the purpose of the study. Teachers were selected through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to

gain, understand, and discover information about the teachers (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Unlike random sampling or probability sampling, purposeful sampling increased the ability to identify themes and generalizations from the study (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013: Mertens, 2010). Three criteria considerations were used for selecting teachers for this study. Criterion sampling strategies were used in order for quality assurance. Teachers were selected for this study based on the following criterion and through careful consideration:

1. Taught at the participant high school for at least four years.
2. Demonstrate a firm understanding of the PBIS initiative.
3. Willingness to participate in this study.

Teacher participation for this study was sought based on responses to the demographic questions given to all teachers on the participant campus. Total years teaching experience and the number of years teaching at the participant high school were verified with the current school principal. The sample group consisted of seven teachers who have taught at the participant high school from four to six years. Gender was also included in the purposeful selection in an effort to obtain a true sample of the teaching staff. Permission to perform research on the participant high school campus was obtained from the participant school district governing board and the school principal of the participant high school. A written consent form was given to all teachers and a meeting was held to explain confidentiality safe guards and participation expectations. All selected teacher teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Sources of Data

        PBIS teacher questionnaire. The first instrument, the five item demographic survey (see Appendix H), was distributed to each teacher within the participant school. All responses were voluntary. The teaching staff at the participant school was also invited to voluntarily respond to a second instrument—the PBIS teacher questionnaire. Since the PBIS teacher questionnaire was used to triangulate the data from the interviews, the questions were the same questions that were developed by the researcher and approved by the panel of experts for the interview questions used for the subsample teachers in this study. The questionnaire asked teachers to respond to each question first in a Likert format asking teachers to rate the impact of PBIS on student academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits to teachers themselves, and the overall influence on the school climate. Each of the four questions was asked two times.

        Question format on the PBIS teacher questionnaire first asked the teachers to rate the influence on a Likert scale and the second time the question was asked in an open-ended format allowing teachers to respond openly and express their thoughts and feelings however they desired. Information from both the Likert-type answers and the open-ended responses were then collected from the teachers (n=31) who were willing to answer the survey. The results of the teacher questionnaires were then analyzed and compiled in order to compare and contrast how the general teaching staff perceived the influence of the PBIS student behavior management system on their campus and how those responses compared to the purposefully selected teachers' responses to the open-ended interview questions.

Open-ended interview questions. The second source of data was four interview questions (see Appendix A) that was designed to determine thoughts and feelings about teacher perceptions of PBIS and the school climate in which they work. Teachers were asked open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview format in an effort to better understand how teachers feel about the PBIS program and whether or not they feel the program itself influences the way teachers feel about their school climate. The four questions used in this study were developed by the researcher and approved by a panel of experts for the validity and readability of the questions being asked. Face-to-face interviews were conducted as a means to increase comprehension of what teachers are sharing as the primary source of data for this interpretive study. Interviews were semi-structured and done face-to-face in an effort to increase comprehensiveness of teachers' answers. Digital audio recording, as well as field notes, also served as sources of observation data for this study. Questions were based on known factors that influence school climate and known benefits of the PBIS program as perceived by teachers through the PBIS staff feedback survey.

Member checking was used to determine the accuracy of the findings to ensure that teachers feel they are accurately portrayed. The researcher checked for accuracy of the findings to ensure validity of the study. Documentation of procedures was provided for this interpretive study as well as step-by-step procedures to allow for replication of this study for further research.

Audio interview responses were transcribed and compared to field notes for reliability. A transcription of what was said by each participant was shared with each participant individually to ensure what was intended to be shared was actually shared

with the researcher. Data transformation was used to allow the researcher to quantify the qualitative data that were gathered (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). After the data were gathered and verified, it was coded to identify themes that existed to conduct a thematic analysis of the information.

      Student referral data. Student referral data were only available for the past six school years since the implementation of the PBIS initiative on the participant high school campus. Attempts to gain referral data pre-implementation were exhaustive. Referrals were tracked and coded to allow the administration to understand what discipline issues were more prominent than others on their campus. Data were obtained through student discipline referrals that have been issued and are separated by minor behavioral issues that are handled in the classroom by the teachers themselves and by major discipline issues that are handled by school administration (see Tables 1 and 2). Through the collection of discipline data delineated from student discipline referrals, the participant high school has been able to not only track their student behavior issues, but have also been able to use that data to demonstrate the relationship that exists between student referrals and the total school population for the past six years on their campus. Three years of longitudinal discipline data were presented and analyzed in this study to demonstrate the types of student behavior incidents taking place on participant high school campus for the past three-year period. Longitudinal referral data compared to total school population by school year were presented to demonstrate the relationship that exists and the decline in student referrals over a six-year period (see Figure 3).

Validity

Internal validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research. Using this approach supports validity in determining if the collected data are accurate from the perspective of the researcher, the teachers, and the reader's account of what has taken place (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Mertens, 2010; Johnson & Christiansen, 2012). In qualitative research, it is important that researchers ensure that their approaches are consistent or establish reliability when working with teachers. Yin (2013) suggested that in an effort to achieve validity, that qualitative researcher should document their procedures of their studies as well as document as many of the procedural steps as possible. In an effort to achieve validity, it is important that researchers follow a detailed interpretive study protocol for their research.

Johnson and Christensen (2012) recommended that researchers use multiple validity strategies for their proposal that will allow them to assess the accuracy of their findings and convince the reader of that accuracy. The validity strategies considered for this study were triangulation of data, rich description, and clarifying the bias. Triangulation of data is accomplished by using different data sources of information to build a coherent justification of themes that have been established and will be used (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Mertens, 2010). Rich description is used to convey the findings of the research being done. This is accomplished by providing detailed descriptions of the setting so that results become more realistic (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Mertens, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), qualitative studies are used when a researcher seeks to explore the depth of a program from one or more individuals. A qualitative study approach requires

that there be a triangulation of data in order to ensure validity and reliability of the study.

Teacher questionnaire data, open-ended interview questions and student referral data served as those sources of data that were triangulated for this study. Because this study also had a sub group of teachers selected based on years teaching at the participant high school, analysis of their responses improve the significance of the data collection and supports a second triangulation of data which ultimately improved the qualitative interpretive study results for this study. Finally, the research should clarify the bias that they themselves may bring to the study. The researcher must self-reflect in an effort to create an open and honest narrative as well as include interpretation of the findings for the reader (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Field notes and audio recording for this study were used to ensure that the information that was written down was the same as what was said by each participant and to describe the physical actions and reactions of the teachers being interviewed. Individual recordings and written responses were given to each individual participant to ensure what was recorded was what they had meant to relay to the researcher. A description of the school, the setting for the interviews, and the PBIS program as it exists was included to ensure validity of the research being done. The four open-ended interview questions used for this study were given to a panel of experts to ensure that the questions being asked clearly represented elements of school climate. All panel members agreed that the questions being asked were appropriate to obtain teacher perceptions of their own school climate. A personal account of the panel of expert's background and experience was the basis for interpretation of the findings on school climate.

Reliability

Baxter and Jack (2008) stated that qualitative reliability is an indication that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researches and different research studies. In an effort to ensure reliability for this interpretive study, safeguards were used to ensure that field notes were transcribed accurately and that the definition of codes were clearly defined. Each participant interviewed for this study was given a set of questions and time to read them through before being asked to elaborate on them. Teachers' were given a number that associated with their responses throughout the study. Interviews were audio record and hand written notes were transcribed to record teachers' individual response. To ensure reliability, field notes were then compared to the audio recording to ensure that what was said and what was written was accurately recorded. This also includes the demographical data that were recorded about each participant. As a final reliability check, teachers were given a copy of the written transcription of their individual interview to also ensure what was recorded was what they meant to portray.

According to Merriam (2009), in a qualitative study the researcher must establish reliability by analyzing data that has been collected and documenting the procedures that have been used. The following procedures were used in order to ensure reliability for this study:

1. Collection and analysis of data.

2. Member checking.

3. Identifying the researcher's bias that may exist.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher for this study has been certified through completion of the CITI training modules. No research was completed prior to obtaining IRB approval from the Grand Canyon University Internal Review Board. Human subjects and data were protected according to the guidelines set forth by Grand Canyon University. Research for this study did not begin until complete Grand Canyon University and its Institutional Review Board had granted approval. The participant Unified School District Governing Board and the principal of the participant high school were contacted in order to obtain site authorization for this study. Participation consent was obtained through written consent forms signed by all teachers. Referring to teachers by number and not by name protected responses provided by teachers.

Teachers on the participant campus use the PBIS program on a daily basis and teachers were familiar with the student discipline data that has been collected. All teachers on the participant campus were given an explanation and purpose of this study along with a PBIS teacher questionnaire and a five question demographic survey. Upon receipt of the staff demographic information, responses were sorted based on the information provided by teachers on the number of years they have been teaching at the participant high school. Seven teachers from each of the sub groups that have been teaching at the participant high school for four to six years (i.e., the school started collecting student referral data post implementation of the PBIS initiative) were asked to participate in this study. Those teachers were given the informed consent procedures for the study as well as being informed that they could have opted out of the study at any given time. Seven teachers were purposefully selected based on the number of years they

have been teaching at the participant high school and by gender. Information from the demographical survey questions that teachers' provided were used to develop themes that may have existed based on the demographic information that teachers have in common. This data were then grouped and prepared for analysis by number of years teaching at the participant high school.

All teachers selected agreed to participate in the interview process were assigned a number 1 through 7 to protect their names and to record information about each individual as they responded. Interviews with each participant were conducted at the participant high school so that teachers were sharing information in their own natural environment. During the semi-structured interview phase, each teacher was asked four open ended questions in which they were asked about school climate and the PBIS program. Interviews were done face-to-face, responses of each participant were audio recorded, and hand written field notes were transcribed to gather teachers' thoughts and feelings. The interviews were semi-structured in nature to allow for flexibility during the interview to allow teachers to further clarify or elaborate on information being shared. The initial interview questions have been development and approved by a panel of experts and were constructed based on the research questions for this study.

At the conclusion of the interviews, information obtained was organized to prepare for data analysis (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Data were then read through and transcribed from the audio recordings of each interview participant. A copy of each individual participant's written responses was then given to each participant for member checking to ensure the accuracy of what had been said by each participant. Discrepancies were then corrected in the presence of the participant to

ensure validity of the research being done. All data will be protected and stored to protect the participant of the study and will be destroyed concluding the completion of this study by using several procedures.

All teachers in this study signed written consent forms agreeing to participate in this study and provided the researcher with demographic information and personal perspectives. Teachers were informed that at any time during this study they had the option not to continue in the study. Teachers were ensured that confidentiality will be maintained and that they will remain anonymous. To ensure anonymity of the teachers all personal identifiers were removed from demographic information and interview responses. All demographic data and teachers' hand written responses were scanned to become electronic data sources for analysis. Electronic resources were housed on an electronic external hard drive that is password protected. Once the research data is collected, it was stored electronically so that only the researcher has access to the data. This data will be stored for a three-year period following completion of the research for future inquiries. All hand written files for this study will be destroyed and all electronic files will be kept on a password protected external hard drive for the same three-year period of time.

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore the phenomenon that may exist between having PBIS on a high school campus and whether PBIS influenced how teachers perceived their own school climate. Current literature exists to show that PBIS indeed does improve students' behavior issues, increases academic success, and improves school climate (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Student referral data

have been collected every year that the PBIS initiative has been in place on the

participant high school campus and was presented and analyzed to demonstrate the

effectiveness of the PBIS initiative. This study explored how having PBIS on a high

school campus influenced how teachers perceived their own school climate through semi-

structured interviews and analysis of data. Following Merriam's (2009) outline, raw data

were collected through audio recording and field notes through the interviews of teachers.

Raw data were organized and prepared by the researcher prior to analysis. All data were

read to obtain a general sense of the information and will reflect on what teachers shared

and to determine the credibility of the information collected. Data collected were hand

coded to organize the material into larger chunks of information. That information was

separated into themes and descriptions to determine if interrelating themes or descriptions

exist in this interpretive study. Finally, data were analyzed to interpret the meaning of the

themes and descriptions identified to validate the accuracy of the information gathered.

This interpretive study was used to explore how teachers felt about their own

school climate when students behave well and there are less classroom disruptions as a

direct result of the PBIS initiative. This qualitative interpretive study presented a detailed

explanation of the phenomenon that exists between PBIS and school climate (Merriam,

2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Hopkins, 2002; Lauer, 2006). The

information obtained from teachers was done in their own natural setting and information

was obtained through talking directly with the teachers and digitally recording their

responses. To manage the data that were collected, coding was used. Coding is an

approach used by researchers to assign themes and designations to the data collected

(Merriam, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The process of coding allows for the

review of data collected and combining data through research reflections. Merriam's data

analysis for qualitative research design was used to organize and prepare the data

obtained for analysis (Merriam, 2009). The coding for this study included identification

and interpretation for analysis for conceptualization (Merriam, 2009; Johnson &

Christensen, 2012).

Merriam (2009) suggested several ideas. With regard to setting and context codes,

the researcher analyzed information regarding the school in which teachers work, the

need for schoolwide behavioral plans, and the nature of the general perception of the

program's effectiveness and created codes to be used for the data gathered. With respect

to perspectives held by subjects, the researcher analyzed information that was obtained

regarding how teachers feel, support from administration, need for school improvement,

and the influence PBIS has on school climate. This information was arranged into themes

that commonly exist for further analysis. With regard to relationships and social

structures, the researcher analyzed information regarding student-teacher relationships,

teacher-teacher relationships, teacher-administrator relationships, and district support to

determine what themes may exist and may need to be further analyzed. Finally, with

regard to problem behaviors and number of occurrences, the researcher obtained three

consecutive years of discipline data from the school to demonstrate what types of

behaviors regularly occurred on the campus and how often. This information is detailed

to demonstrate a decrease of discipline referrals and a lack of what would be considered

serious behavior issues on the campus.

In this study, coding was used to discover new data, conceptualize data, provide

rationale for possible reasoning, and provide questioning. Merriam's (2009) qualitative

analysis requires that the coded categories be placed in themes, which were used to explain the phenomenon being studied. In this step, teachers' perceptions of school climate were deemed negative, neutral, or positive in nature. Premise for being placed in one of three labels was based on the overall responses of each individual participant.

Responses from the seven purposefully selected teachers were compared to the interview questions that the teachers provided. Responses to the interview questions were coded based on years of experience teaching at the participant high school. The researcher used this information to compare similarities and differences to responses based on responses from teachers and the general teaching staff. This step assisted in understanding the influence of teaching experience and experience with the PBIS initiative on how teachers responded to each question.

Themes were presented by their corresponding comparative findings that allowed the researcher to tell their story through the voice of the teachers. Merriam (2009) used seven themes as the subject of the narrative descriptions for the interpretive study. Interpretive experiences begin by presenting the perceptions that each participant had on PBIS and its influence on their school climate. The narrative gives rich detail and a description of how teachers feel about their school climate. The narrative concluded with an explanation of how each participant feels PBIS has affected their school campus and what, if any, influence PBIS has had on how they personally perceive the state of the current school climate.

Finally, a hierarchical approach presented the data and findings in hierarchical order to make interpretations (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Information gathered from the seven teachers was arranged hierarchically based

on their gender and years teaching at the participant high school. Only teachers who have taught at the participant high school for at least four to six years were selected to participate because they have enough knowledge and background of student discipline data and the success of the PBIS initiative on their campus. In this step the researcher was able to present interpretive study conclusions and also recommendations for future research.

Responses that were collected from the teachers of this study were compared to existing concepts/dimension from theories of educational climate and schoolwide behavior plans that already exist in the literature. In an effort to better understand the theory that exists, this qualitative study implemented data coding (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Snelgrove, 2014). Coding was developed to create a qualitative study database (Yin, 2013). The qualitative database consisted of interview notes, interview transcriptions, survey information, and demographic information. Interview transcripts were read, demographic data were compared, and reflections from the PBIS staff feedback survey results were stored in the interpretive study database. As the interview transcripts were examined from each participant, comments and queries were written in the margins (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Snelgrove, 2014). The researcher's marginal notes were compared to the research questions and analyzed through the theoretical framework. Categories were constructed for each participant and a list of concepts was developed (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Creating categories caused reoccurring patterns to surface in order to develop and generalize emerging themes or theories that assisted the researcher in drawing conclusions (Snelgrove, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to collecting any data for this study, site approval was applied for and gained from the Institutional Review Board of Grand Canyon University. The site authorization was sought and approval was gained from the Participant Unified School District Governing Board and the principal of the participant high school. Approval sought to conduct this study also included participant recruitment information and informed consent from teachers themselves. In an effort to protect teachers' anonymity as well as the educational institution, the researcher assigned numbers to teachers and removed all personal identifying attributes from information collected. All teachers for this study were asked to read and understand the informed consent. The informed consent outlined the teachers right to avoid participating and their ability to withdraw from the study at any given time.

All information gained from the teachers through interviews and data collected from this study have been stored on a password-protected external hard drive to maintain the chain of evidence until the completion of the research (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Data that were collected was presented in the words and viewpoints of the teachers' themselves and was not manipulated in any way and was maintained to protect teachers' confidentiality. The Participant school district also had the right to avoid participation or withdraw the selected teachers at any given time. Teachers were not given any compensation and it was the intent of this researcher that there was no risk incurred by teachers for their participation in this study. All teachers were selected through the use of purposeful sampling for the purpose of maintaining ethical integrity.

Limitations

  This study identified limitations that may exist based on the lack of theoretical foundation for teachers' perceptions of school climate that have been influenced by the PBIS program. While there may be previous research and literature that has been studied that suggest that PBIS is effective in improving student behavior, little research exists to determine whether the PBIS program has any influence on teachers' perceptions of school climate. While previous research and literature exists that studied teachers' perceptions on school climate and schoolwide behavior initiatives for improving student behavior, little research has been studied to determine the influence of PBIS on teachers' perception of school climate (Gunbayi, 2007; Zhang & Liu, 2010; Miramontes et al., 2011; Coffey & Horner, 2012). Teachers being studied in their own environment with already established values and beliefs may lead to potential bias by teachers in this study. Attempting to assure reliability could minimize bias in a study. In order to ensure that reliability existed throughout the study, specific qualitative study protocols were followed by the researcher to avoid preconceived notions (Yin, 2013).

  Qualitative research by design seeks to determine the reason behind a single behavior or a series of behavior when referencing a specific topic or group (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010). Limitations may be acknowledged because the teachers for this study had only been exposed to PBIS as a schoolwide behavior management system. Since the implementation of PBIS nine years ago, teachers have been trained in the use of PBIS to improve student behaviors and have never explored any other options. Because there was buy-in by the school administration and the

majority of the teaching staff, teachers may not feel like they could challenge the plan that was set in motion. Since no other behavior management plans have been considered or looked at, teachers may have had potential bias in their responses (Yin, 2013).

With concern to interpretation and validity of findings, there are limitations that exist within qualitative research studies. Possible bias by teachers in this study and the researcher does not necessarily guarantee that the views of teachers in this study are typical. A second limitation that may be acknowledged is the fact that teachers in the study had taught at the participant high school for at least four to six years. Teachers who were interviewed for the study agreed to implement PBIS on their campus and were a part of the initial trainings and in-services that went along with full implementation. Because the teachers may be convinced that PBIS was the program that would be best used on their campus, they may have some false bias as to the influence that program had on their own personal perspectives of school climate. A third limitation that must be acknowledged is the positive impressions the teachers have about their students. Since student referral data did not exist pre-implementation of the PBIS program, benefits to teachers themselves and their school climate may be more associated with their own perceptions or expectations rather than the PBIS program itself, not demonstrating causality. The purpose of this qualitative research was to understand the role the researcher plays in gathering data, analysis of data, and interpretation of the data collected from this study (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Mertens, 2010).

Summary

In this chapter, the methodological considerations for this study were addressed. In Chapters 1 and 2 the statement of the problem and research question to guide this study were addressed. This qualitative research methodology utilized an interpretive study design to explore the degree in which PBIS influence how teachers perceive their own school climate. In an effort to understand the influence that PBIS has on student academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits for teachers' themselves, and the school's culture, multiple sources of data were used in an effort to develop a rich qualitative study (Merriam, 2009; Roberts, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Chapters 3 and 4 will provide the rationale for the methodology and the interpretive study approach chosen for this study. A complete review of the population being studied, the sample size being used, and the rationale for applying purposeful sampling was formalized in this chapter.

The three methods of data collection were identified and explained within the sources of data. Participant interviews were also discussed and included in the sources of data. The data analysis section describes the three sources of data and how that data were used to triangulate the data, which increases the reliability and validity of this study. Data for this interpretive study was not collected until permission and consent were granted from Grand Canyon University, the research school, the school district, and teachers themselves. Sources of data for this interpretive study consisted of a teacher PBIS questionnaire, demographical survey information used to select and describe the teachers, field notes from semi-structured interviews, the audio recording of those interviews, and data from three years of longitudinal student referral data.

According to Mertens (2010), the use of interviews and direct observation of teachers allowed the researcher to better understand the environment in which the study is being conducted. Direct questioning and interview transcriptions allowed each participant to express their own personal perception confidentially (Lauer, 2006). Within the data analysis section, a coding technique was used that allowed the researcher to simplify data and transfer the data collected into emerging codes. Ethical considerations were used in order to protect the anonymity of the teachers in this study; all identifying personal aspects were removed and replaced with numbers. In an effort to ensure that files containing data will be both protected and secured, information was stored on a password protected external hard drive. Merriam's (2009) hierarchical approach to a systematic process for data analysis was utilized in this study.

Through the use of an interpretive study approach, it is important that the possibility of limitations that may exist be discussed. In an effort to overcome limitations that may exist, ensuring that reliability and validity exists within the study through confidentiality of teachers and storage of the data collected was of the highest priority. Multiple sources of data were used to present the findings of this study through rich descriptions of data analysis. The methodology used in this research will provide the foundations for developing and completing Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. Chapter 4 will include the analysis and data collection, presentation and protocol for the semi-structure interview process, and interpretive descriptions for this chapter. While data analysis will provide information that exists on emerging themes, school climate, schoolwide behavior plan, and teacher demographical information will be detailed further in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore how PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions on school climate within a participant school located in Southern Arizona. Through analysis of student referral data, a PBIS teacher questionnaire, and face-to-face interviews, the self-perceptions of seven high school teachers on their school climate and the influence that PBIS had on those perceptions was collected. During this interpretive study, four open-ended interview questions exploring the teachers' perception of their school climate was researched to determine if PBIS had any influence on those perceptions and, if so, how and why? In order to understand the influence of PBIS in relation to teachers' perceptions of school climate, which includes student academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits for teachers, and the school culture that exists, the limitations and influences of PBIS were analyzed. The difference in years of teaching experience and level of education allowed the researcher to explore differences between participant responses and the responses from the general teaching staff as well. Additionally, because PBIS has been in existence for nine years and teachers in this study have been using them for a minimum of four to six years in their classrooms, the influence that PBIS has on school climate was studied. The following research question guided this study:

R_1: How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate?

This study used the qualitative interpretive study design in order to generate deep, rich data in an effort to understand how PBIS influenced teachers' perceptions of their

own school climate. PBIS teacher questionnaire data, student referral data, and face-to-face interviews that were conducted over a four-week period at the beginning at the 2014-2015 school year have been triangulated. Data were gathered and collected for the entire 4-week period from September to October. The remainder of this chapter presents the descriptive data and demographic information of the teachers in this study and provides an analysis of the data that were collected. The data analysis is organized to demonstrate how it relates to the four interview questions through themes that emerged. Results from the data analysis describe the factors that contribute to the phenomena being studied and identified the influence that existed. The results in this chapter are followed by the conclusion that provides a brief summary of the findings for this study.

Descriptive Data

Six years of longitudinal student referral data, a PBIS teacher questionnaire, and responses from four open-ended interview questions by the teachers were triangulated in order to demonstrate the influence that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of their school climate. For this qualitative interpretive study, three criteria were used to select the teachers using purposeful sampling. The seven high school teachers were selected for this study through careful consideration criteria. The teachers had to have taught at the participant high school for at least four to six years. They had to demonstrate a firm understanding of the PBIS initiative and had to be willing to participate in the study.

Teachers and environment. For this qualitative interpretive study, seven teachers were selected from the demographic information that they provided. Five of the teachers were female and two were male. The teachers' ages ranged from 28-years-old to 51 years of age. The total years of teaching experience ranged from four years to eighteen

years and their highest educational degree ranged from BA/BS to MA/MS. In an effort to maintain confidentiality for each participant, the teachers were coded to protect their identity. Participant 1 was coded as Teacher 1, Participant 2 was coded as Teacher 2, Participant 3 was coded as Teacher 3, Participant 4 was coded as Teacher 4, Participant 5 was coded as Teacher 5, Participant 6 was coded as Teacher 6, and Participant 7 was coded as Teacher 7.

Teacher 7 is the most experienced teacher in the group with18 years of teaching experience. She is 46 years of age. Teacher 7 does have a degree beyond her BS and has obtained her MA/MS degree. Teacher 7 has been teaching at the participant high school for six years. Teacher 2 is the second most experienced teacher in the group and has been teaching for 18 years now. He does not have a degree beyond his BA/BS and has been teaching at the participant high school for four to six years. Teacher 2 is the oldest teacher in the group at 51 years of age. Teacher 3 has been teaching for six years and does not have a degree beyond his BS. He is 34 years of age and has been teaching at the participant high school for four years. Teacher 4 has been teaching for 10 years and has her MA/MS degree. She is 44 years of age and has been teaching at the participant high school for five years. Teacher 5 has been teaching for four years and has her MA/MS degree. She has taught all four of those years at the participant high school and is 49 years of age. Teacher 6 has been teaching for nine years and has her MA/MS degree. She has been teaching at the participant high school for five years and is 34 years of age. Teacher 1 is the youngest participant in the group at 28 years of age. She does not have a degree beyond her BA/BS degree and has been teaching for 5.5 years now. Teacher 1 has been teaching at the participant high school for four years.

Each of the teachers have been part of the PBIS initiative at the participant high school and have been trained annually on strategies and expectations of the program at their school. As a member of the teaching staff, the teachers were required to teach lessons about PBIS and to help establish expectations for students through advisory lessons and conversations with students. A school rewards system was established and all staff members who work at the participant high school put procedures in place to ensure consistency with expectations and awards. Some of the teachers also serve on the schools leadership team for the PBIS initiative and work as liaisons between the teaching staff and the school administration. Teachers at the participant high school are all expected to deal with students' discipline behaviors that are deemed as minor infractions in the classroom and to track those behaviors as part of the schools discipline data. Student misconduct that is deemed major in nature is sent to the office through office referrals written by the teaching staff. Those disciplinary interactions are done by school administration and tracked as part of the schools overall discipline data. The idea behind PBIS is to identify students through a tiered level system that allows the school to identify particular students at the various levels and to implement strategies to change their problem behaviors. The tiered system and levels of identification are illustrated in Figure 1.

Designing Schoolwide Systems for Student Success

Academic Instruction

Tertiary Interventions
(for individual students)
• Assessment-based
• High Intensity

1-5%

Secondary Interventions
(for some students)
• High Efficiency
• Rapid Response

5-10%

Universal Interventions
(for all students)
• Preventive, Proactive

80-90%

Behavioral Instruction

Tertiary Interventions
(for individual students)
• Assessment-based
• Intense, durable procedures

1-5%

Secondary Interventions
(for some students: at-risk)
• High Efficiency
• Rapid Response

5-10%

Universal Interventions
(for all students)
• All Settings
• Preventive, Proactive

80-90%

Figure 1. PBIS model (PBIS.org).

In an effort to fulfill their mission, of Connections, High Standards, Success, at

the participant high school the adults and students on their campus work in unison to

empower each other to live out their mission every day. One way they accomplish this is

using a student reward system to focus students on their positive behaviors. They have

several rewards or privileges in place to enhance their student's school experiences. One

of the most successful methods of accomplishing this is through their student reward

cards called *Phat Cat* cards. These *Phat Cat* cards are the scratch type cards that can be

earned by students for demonstrating one or more of their mission qualities. As a part of

this program any student can earn a *Phat Cat* card for a simple act of kindness or self-

improvement. In an effort to be consistent as a faculty and staff, all adults on campus

carry these cards to hand out to deserving students when they encounter them. The cards

have a scratch off front that reveals the prize that a student has earned. The prizes vary

and can be anything from a free admission to an athletic or fine arts event, a free lunch, a

navy prize, a copper prize, or they can be entered into a *Phat Cat* drawing for a grand

prize at the end of the year. By keeping positive behavior at the forefront of what the participant high school is doing for their students, student referrals continue to decline on the participant high school campus.

Data Analysis

Analysis of this study took place during the data collection process. According to Merriam (2009), the process of data analysis involves making sense out of the data that has been gathered. This interpretive study was deeply rooted in grounded theory and established themes and code moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data that was collected (Merriam, 2009). Analysis of three years of student referral data outlined the different types of student behavior issues that were most prevalent on the participant high school campus over three consecutive years. Student referral data over a three-year period also demonstrated the number of student referrals by type and by school year. Analysis of the considerable amount of data collected from each of the four research questions revealed four main themes and six sub-themes for this study. The evidence from the research that was completed advocated that a particular research question surfaced more often than others and was more prominent than others in participant responses. The remainder of this chapter explains the analysis of the data for this study as well as the results from the research done according to participant responses to each research question.

Analysis of the data for this study occurred during the data collections process. According to Merriam (2009), in a qualitative study the researcher must establish reliability by analyzing data that has been collected and documenting the procedures that have been used. This study, entrenched in the transformational learning theory,

established codes in order to analyze and interpret the meaning of the themes and descriptions identified to validate the accuracy of the information gathered. In an effort to ensure validity existed through surfacing themes, the data were triangulated to confirm perceptions of teachers. Once themes were identified or emerged through analysis, they were refined and integrated while being tested to explain the phenomenon being studied. Participant responses and the number of times that each participant referenced each topic or that was triangulated from the data collection instruments generated the four main themes and six sub-themes that emerged.

In an effort to ensure validity of the study, field notes and audio recordings were used to ensure that the information that was written down was exactly the same as what was said by each participant. Field notes were also used to describe the physical actions and reactions of the teachers being interviewed. Individual recorded and written responses were transcribed and then given back to each individual participant to ensure what was recorded was what they had meant to relay to the researcher during the interviews. Direct interaction with the teachers through face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to experience the environment while capturing the body language and gestures while recording responses to assist in supporting the themes that emerged. Data analysis began with a systematic approach that started with raw data being organized and prepared for analysis (Merriam, 2009). During the teachers fall break at the end of September, analysis of the teacher demographic data and student referral data was conducted.

Thorough examination of the student referral data that exists from the past six school years, as compared to the total student population for the same six-year period,

provides the percentage of referrals in relationship to the total student population. The

participant high school has completed its ninth year of the PBIS initiative last school year

and has tracked their students' referral data for the past six school years. The number of

referrals by school year as compared to the total student population for that same year is

reflected in Figure 2. The participant high school is on a semi-annual school calendar and

therefore has discipline data that has been collected for eleven months out of the year.

Specific numbers reflect student referral data and student populations for the school years

2008-09, 2009-10, 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 in bar graph form.

Total Referrals by School Year

School Year	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
# of Referrals	638	748	759	617	464	473
Student Population	1781	1897	2059	2046	1867	1863
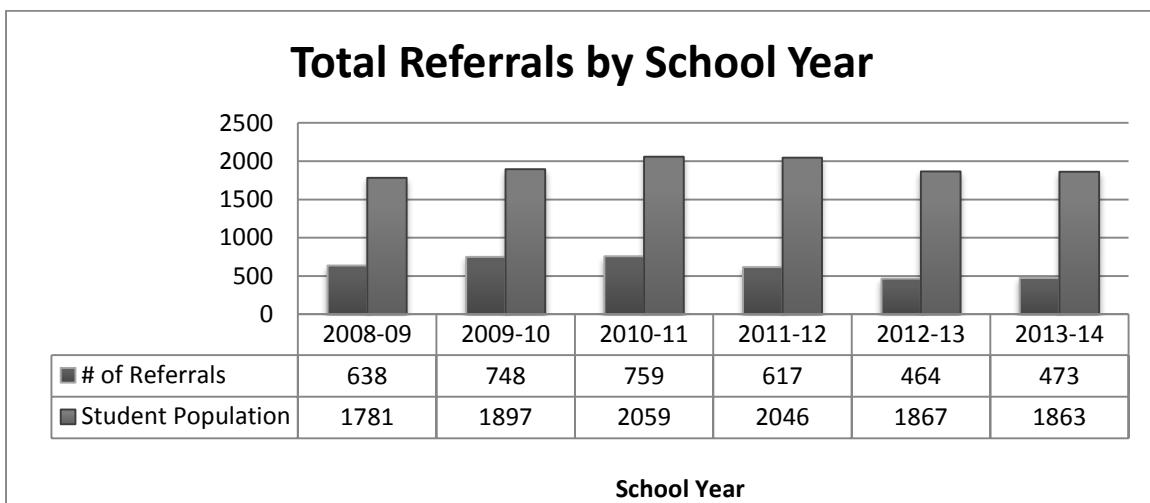
Figure 2. Total Number of Student Referrals by School Year by Total Population.

When comparing the number of referrals by year, the highest year in any one year

was in 2010-11 with 759 referrals. That same school year was also the highest year for

total school population with 2059 students attending. The second highest year for total

referrals was in 2009-10 and the second highest year for student population was in 2011-

12. The lowest number of referrals in any one school year was in 2012-13 with only 464

student referrals with the lowest year for student population being in 2008-09 with only

1781 students attending school that year. To understand the relationship of annual student

referrals to annual student population by specific year, a chi-square test was completed to

reflect the relationship of referrals by student population. Figure 3 was created to

demonstrate the specific data contingency table of student referrals compared to total

population by year. The expected value is based on the percentage of the total student

body for that year who were referred, relative to the percentage of referrals for each of

the other years.

Table 1

Student Referral by School Year Data Contingency

	Student Referral by School Year Contingency Table						
	2008-09	**2009-10**	**2010-11**	**2011-12**	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	
Referrals	638 *572.22* (7.56)	748 *609.49* (31.48)	759 *661.53* (14.36)	617 *657.36* (2.48)	464 *599.85* (30.76)	473 *598.56* (26.34)	**3699**
Expected Referrals	1143 *1208.78* (3.58)	1149 *1287.51* (14.90)	1300 *1397.47* (6.80)	1429 *1388.64* (1.17)	1403 *1267.15* (14.56)	1390 *1264.44* (12.47)	**7814**
	1781	**1897**	**2059**	**2046**	**1867**	**1863**	**11513**

$\chi^2 = 166.469$, df = 5, $\chi^2/df = 33.29$, $P(\chi^2 > 166.469) = 0.0000$
Note. expected values are displayed in *italics*
individual χ^2 values are displayed in (parentheses)

Table 1 was created to demonstrate the total number of actual referrals in

relationship to the expected number of referrals by school year as compared to the total

student population since the school began collecting referral data. When comparing

student referral data by year, the school years 2009-10, 20012-13, and 2013-14 where the

total student population was relatively the same suggests that the relationship to the

number of referrals tracked in relationship to the total population had a strong correlation.

The highest number of referrals in any one school year with 759 student referrals were

issued in 2010-11. The school year of 2012-13 had the lowest number of referrals with 464, over the six school years. The school year 2013-14 was just slightly higher than the previous school year with a total number of referrals reaching 473, which were just nine more referrals than the previous year. To further explain the influence of the referral data that has been collected in relationship to actual teacher perceptions of school climate, a comparison of the total number of student referrals by school year to the total student population was also completed. Using a chi-square test, and under the assumption that by chance alone each year should have 50% of the total number of referrals for the same six year period of time given that student population was roughly an equal size for the student bodies compared each year. To put that data into perspective, the deviations of the observed values from the expected values were statistically significantly different across the years with larger populations than those school years where the population was relatively the same.

Managing student behavior at school is a task that all teachers and administrators share on a daily basis. As issues surrounding student behavior evolve, schools and school districts have turned to schoolwide behavior programs as a means to deal with student behavior that is less than desirable in the classroom. In regards to student discipline, schools have historically focused on creating safe environments that promote student learning and a place where learning is of highest priority (Gunbayi, 2007). In an effort to create a learning environment by combining learning with student safety, schools have turned to schoolwide behavior programs and student reward models that promote a more positive school environment for students. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) found that every educational environment establishes a climate that makes it unique from other

schools or organizations. The act of blending the way that students behave in a school environment and the way that teachers interact with those students is what defines the school climate. In schools, having a positive climate is the necessary link between a school's operational structure and teacher attitudes and behaviors (Gunbayi, 2007).

To understand what types of student behaviors have been taking place on the participant high school campus over the past three-year period, the types of student referrals by school year were also analyzed. The participant high school has also tracked student referral data by problem behaviors in an effort to identify the areas that they must focus on as a faculty and staff. The numbers of student referrals by problem behavior by school year are defined in Table 1. When looking at the data represented by problem behavior incident by school year, the number of referrals in 2011-12 are the greatest in the areas of defiance, truancy, and other. The 2012-13 school year has the most referrals in the area of disruption and lying, while the 2013-14 school year leads the way in skipping class, technical issues, and tobacco use. Problem behaviors that appear to be very consistent are in the area of theft. When comparing all three school years by number of referral incidents, there are years that are very similar in number but not necessarily consistent by consecutive years.

Table 2

Problem Behavior Incidents by Year

Problem Behavior	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Defiance/Insubordination	88	53	62
Physical Aggression	1	4	4
Disruption	70	73	6
Disrespect	0	0	1
Abus/Inapt. Language	35	25	31
Tardy	6	0	10
Skip Class	108	132	144
Harassment	15	27	7
Bullying	0	1	2
Fighting	32	29	13
Out of Bounds	0	1	2
Truancy	34	1	0
Theft/Forgery/Plagiarism	17	17	17
Technology Violation	15	12	18
Property Damage/Vandalism	5	1	6
Lying/Cheating	13	23	3
Dress Code Violation	5	1	3
Inapt. Display of Affection	3	2	0
Use/Possession of Tobacco	13	5	34
Lying/Cheating	13	23	3
Dress Code Violation	5	1	3
Inapt. Display of Affection	3	2	0
Use/Possession of Tobacco	13	5	34
Use/Possession of Drugs	24	18	7
Use/Possessions of Weapons	5	6	5
Use/Possession of Combust.	2	8	0
Use/Possession of Alcohol	3	3	15
Gang Affiliation/Display	2	2	5
Other Behavior	123	20	19
Minor Other Behavior	0	1	0
Total	617	464	473

Thorough review of the student referral data for specific problem behaviors by actual number of incidents per school year for three school years and comparison of the total student population for the past six years further triangulates the data for this study

and suggests that student referral numbers may have been improved. The comparison of problem behaviors by school year as defined, the behavior labeled, and other behavior was the biggest issue in 2011-12, with a total of 123 incidents. The second most incidents were skipping class with 108 incidents, while defiance or insubordination (88 incidents) and disruptions (70 incidents) were also problem areas for that school year. For the school year 2012-13, skipping class had the most recorded incidents with 132 incidents. During the 2012-13 school year, defiance/insubordination dropped back to 53 incidents and disruption was up slightly with 73 incidents. Finally, in the 2013-14 school year, skipping class escalated to 144 incidents and defiance/insubordination also went up to 62 incidents. During the 2013-14 school year, disruptions fell slightly to only 65 incidents. Analysis of the student referral data for a three-year period while focusing on incidents that had very few referrals issues, bullying by students was almost nonexistent, with only two incidents in 2013-14. Also noted in the schools past three-year longitudinal referral data was the very low number of dangerous incidents such as fighting, drugs, alcohol, possession of weapons, harassment, and inappropriate language being low in incident number which appears to be somewhat consistent for three years.

At the beginning of the second week of the second quarter of instruction for the teachers, face-to-face interviews were conducted on the participant high school campus. Transcription of those interviews and analysis of field notes from teachers' responses to interview questions began immediately the following week. In a review of the interview transcriptions and direct face-to-face interactions with the teachers, initial categories were established based on information provided about the teachers' self-perceptions of their school environment and the influence that PBIS may have had on those perceptions. All

teachers responded to each of the four interview questions and articulated their thoughts and feelings. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed within 48 hours. Member checking was established by allowing each participant to review the transcription of their interview as individuals.

The third piece of data used for this study was the PBIS Teacher Questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to all teachers at the participant high school electronically and responses to the questionnaire were gathered and tabulated. The questionnaire allowed all teachers who chose to respond to share their perceptions of the influence the PBIS had on student academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits to teachers, and the overall culture and climate of their school. Teachers' responses to the questionnaire are demonstrated in Figure 4 and were used to demonstrate the number of responses by ranking of influence from the 31 teachers who answered the questionnaire.
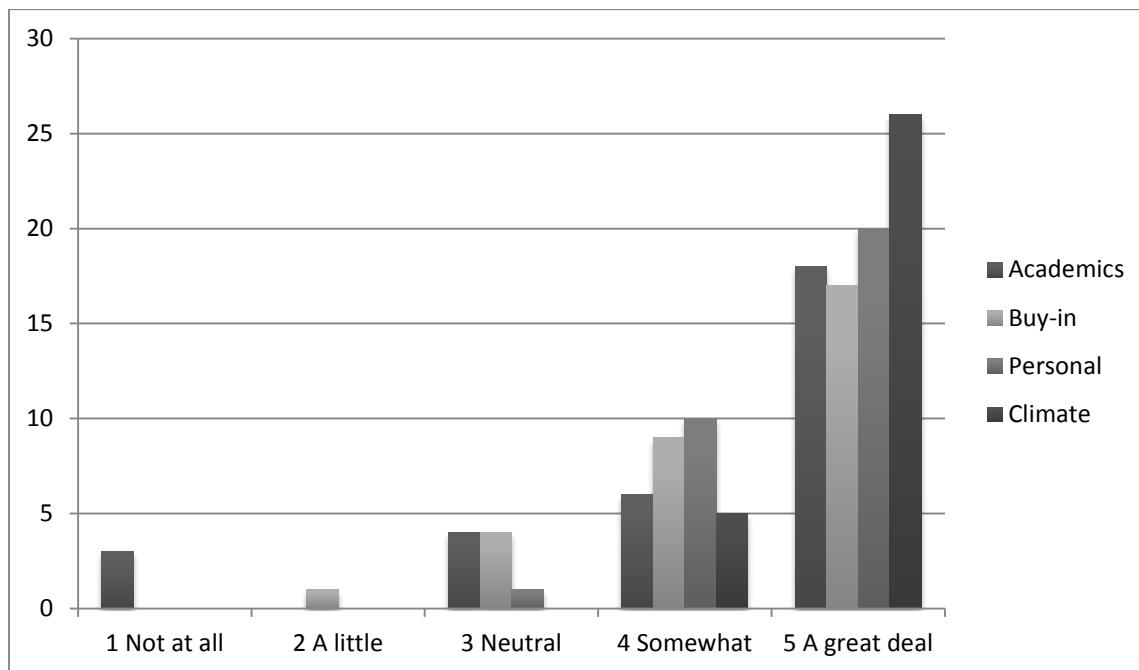

Figure 3. Teacher's total responses by influence.

Data Analysis Procedures

Interview questions for this study were established prior to the study taking place and were approved by a panel of experts to ensure that these questions would allow teachers to share their thoughts and feelings about the influence PBIS may have on their school climate. These questions were not shared with the teachers prior to the day of the interview so that they were not able to plan, prepare, or rehearse their responses prior to being interviewed. The face-to-face interviews consisted of four open-ended questions that asked each participant to share their thoughts and feelings about how PBIS influenced their own perceptions in their classrooms and at their school. Specifically, the interview questions were designed to find out what each participant perceived PBIS to influence the academic success of their students, how teachers in general reacted to the PBIS program, the benefits of having PBIS on themselves personally, and the impact PBIS has on their own school climate.

At the beginning of the second week of the second quarter of instruction for the teachers, face-to-face interviews were conducted on the participant high school campus. Transcriptions of those interviews and analysis of field notes and teachers responses to interview questions began immediately the following week. Through review of the interview transcriptions and directed face-to-face interactions with the teachers, initial categories were established based on information provided about the teachers' self-perceptions of their school environment and the influence that PBIS may have had on those perceptions. All teachers responded to each of the four interview questions and articulated their thoughts and feelings. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed within 48 hours. In consideration of validity in this study, member checking

was established by allowing each participant to review the transcription of their interview as individuals. In order to assure that the thoughts and feelings of each participant were recorded and transcribed to portray exactly what each participant had shared during the interviews, a copy of the transcription was emailed directly to each participant so they could review the transcription and validate they were accurate.

Interviews were conducted to compare the perceptions of each participant in their own natural environment. The purpose of the interviews was to add rich detail and supporting data for each of the four research questions. Because the interviews were done face-to-face and in an open-ended format, information about participant perceptions were both verbally recorded and field notes were taken while observing body language and facial expressions of each participant. Due to the research question design, responses from each participant varied slightly based on their own individual perceptions of the PBIS program. An attempt was made to get each participant to be as specific as possible with their thoughts and feelings while also allowing teachers to provide their own personal perceptions. All teachers responded to all four-interview questions during the interviews. Interviews were audio recorded, filed notes were taken, and member checking was established by allowing each participant to review the interview transcriptions. The collection of data and data analysis remained the same for every participant. Due to the amount of data collected from each of the seven teachers, it was necessary to assemble the data.

Table 3.

Coding

	E	R	B	C
Q1	7	6	7	7
Q2	6	7	5	7
Q3	7	6	7	7
Q4	7	4	6	7
Total	27	23	25	28

Throughout the face-to-face interviews, initial themes surfaced around a positive

classroom environment: (E) the ability to provide quality instruction due to students'

attitudes about learning, Respect and Rapport; (R) the ability of both teachers and

students to understand and appreciated each other, Personal Benefits; (B) benefits to

teachers directly through having the PBIS system in place, and Positive School Climate;

and (C) the attitudes that teachers have about their school and their desire to work at the

participant high school. Next, these codes were then analyzed and paired with those

responses that related them into a common theme and then moved into common

categories that were derived from the codes (Merriam, 2009). Table 3 identifies the

categories that surfaced and led to an emerging theme regarding teacher perceptions

about the influence of PBIS on their school climate. Table 4 provides the total number of

responses by theme that derived from the data that was collected.

Table 4.

Total Responses by Theme

		E			R				B			C		
	c	s	p	m	c	b	d	s	t	v	g	h	c	s
P1	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	2	3
P2	2	4	3	3	1	3	4	1	3	2	3	3	2	3
P3	1	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	2
P4	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	1	2
P5	2	3	1	4	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2
P6	0	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
P7	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2
Sub	13	18	13	13	11	15	14	11	20	16	17	15	12	16
Total		44			58				47			60		

Table 5.

Themes and Subthemes

Code Descriptor	Theme	Sub-Theme
cE	Classroom Environment Influence	Confidence
sE	Classroom Environment Influence	High Standards
pE	Classroom Environment Influence	Proactive
mR	Respect and Rapport Influence	Mutual
cR	Respect and Rapport Influence	Comfortable
bR	Respect and Rapport Influence	Buy-In
dR	Respect and Rapport Influence	Data-Driven
sB	Personal Benefit Influence	Stress Level
tB	Personal Benefit Influence	Limited Disruptions
vB	Personal Benefit Influence	Shared Values
gC	School Climate Influence	Good People
hC	School Climate Influence	Happiness
cC	School Climate Influence	Common Language
sC	School Climate Influence	School Climate

In review of the data from the face-to-face interviews, participant responses were analyzed to demonstrate a practical and theoretical understanding of the data. Responses of teachers were broken down into sub-themes from the four themes that existed initially.

When looking at the average of sub-themes that existed from each theme based on responses from the seven individual teachers, the averages were nearly the same in each category. Their responses as broken down by themes and sub-themes ensured that saturation had indeed been achieved in this study (Merriam, 2009). The themes of Positive Classroom Environment, Respect and Rapport, and Positive School Climate all averaged the same percentage while the theme of personal Benefits for teachers was just one percentage point higher than the other three themes. Figure 5 presents the averages of sub-theme categories. These numbers represent the amount of times the sub theme surfaced by each participant during his or her interview. Table 6 provides the description for coding.
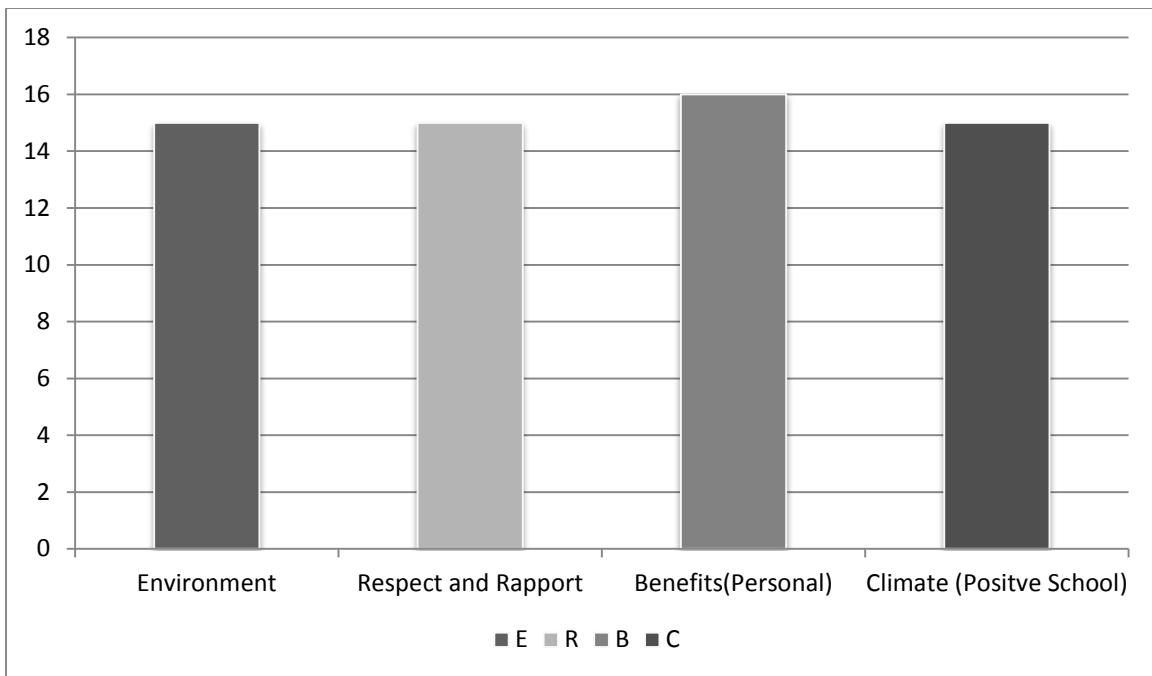

Figure 4. Subtheme averages.

Table 6.

Initial Coding Table

Code Descriptor	Theme
P	Classroom Environment Influence
R	Respect and Rapport Influence
B	Personal Benefit Influence
C	School Climate Influence

In order to explain how this data relates to the research question for this study, the remaining section will frame the analysis around the themes that emerged from participant interviews and the PBIS teacher questionnaire.

Results

There were four questions used to solicit responses from teachers about their thoughts and feeling regarding their own perceptions as to what extent, if any, the PBIS behavior management system had on their own school climate. The responses from all seven teachers were used to develop the themes and sub-themes that have been previously described. This study used teacher demographic information as a means of deciding which teachers would be selected to participate in the face-to-face interviews. Teachers who had been teaching at the participant high school for four to six years were the target group selected for this study. Seven of the nine teachers who met the criteria for participation outlined in this study did agree to participate. Six years of student referral data in comparison to the total student population were gathered and analyzed to demonstrate the relationship of the number of referrals to student population at the participant high school and teachers' perceptions of school climate. Responses from seven teachers who participated in face-to-face, semi-structured interview were transcribed, analyzed, and coded to demonstrate the themes and sub-themes that existed

from their responses. From those responses, the teachers' thoughts feeling and

perceptions of the PBIS behavior management system were defined.

In an effort to triangulate data and to have a rich descriptive data that would

support or contradict the teachers' perceptions of the PBIS student behavior management

system, a PBIS teacher questionnaire was given electronically to all teachers on the

participant high school campus. This questionnaire asked teachers to respond to the same

question asked of the teachers in two different ways. First, each question was asked in a

Likert type fashion that required the teacher to rank the influence PBIS has had on their

student academic success, teacher buy-in to the program, personal benefits that may exist,

and the overall influence of PBIS on the school clime.

The teaching staff was also asked the exact same questions in an open-ended

format where they could express their own personal thoughts and feelings just as the

teachers did in the interview. Thirty-one teachers (25%) responded to the questionnaire.

All 31 teachers responded to the Likert scale questions, but not all took the time to

answer the question in the open-ended format. The open-ended responses from the

teachers who took the time to answer the questions were very similar to the benefits

described by the participant in their interviews. Since all teachers completed the Likert-

type questions that identified the influence that the PBIS student behavior management

system had on student academic success, teacher buy–in, personal benefits, and their

school climate, that data was analyzed and is demonstrated in Figure 4. Teachers were

asked to rank their personal thoughts and feelings about each area of influence form one

to five on the scale. A score of 1 meant that there was no influence at all and a 5 meant

that PBIS very much influenced that focus area.

The research question for this study was: How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate? In this study, three sources of data (interviews, longitudinal referral data, and the PBIS questionnaire) were collected and analyzed to answer the research question and define exactly how teachers perceive the influence of PBIS on their school climate. In order to answer the research question, How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate, data were analyzed to determine the extent to which each teachers' perceptions were impacted. As a means to improve school climate, research exists (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Eber et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2006; Miramontes et al., 2011) that demonstrates the benefits of having PBIS on a school campus. According to Coffey and Horner (2012), when classrooms are free of student behavior issues that disrupt the learning environment for all students, teachers have more time to deliver the quality instruction necessary for increasing the academic success of those students they teach. The teachers in this study articulated their own personal beliefs as to the PBIS behavior management system. They discussed the influence on the academic performance of their students, how well accepted the PBIS system was received by teachers, whether there were perceived personal benefits that existed for the teachers themselves from having the PBIS system in place, and if the teachers felt their school climate was indeed influenced by the existence of the PBIS system. Responses from each participant were triangulated through interviews and the PBIS questionnaire and compared to the student referral data for the last three years to ensure what was perceived was also present in the referral data that was collected.

The teachers' self-perceptions of the influence that PBIS had on their school and themselves were compared by looking for evidence through the teachers' interview transcriptions. Similar themes and sub-themes emerged from the data, which became meaningful with the frequency and intensity in which they appeared. From the data, key similarities and differences between participant's responses, as triangulated with the questionnaire data and referral data, were discussed and then concluded. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the influence having the PBIS behavior management system had on the participant high school campus and their school climate in general. The results of participant responses are discussed in relation to each of the four interview questions.

The first interview question was: How do you feel the PBIS behavior management system influences the academic performances of your students? With identifying how PBIS affects students academically in the classroom, the self-perceptions of the teachers revolved around having a positive classroom environment. The sub-themes that were identified were student confidence, having high standards, and being proactive with students. The teachers described the influence of PBIS on student academic success as laying the foundation for students to have a positive classroom environment where learning can take place. Participant 1 described impact in terms of minimizing discipline issues. Participant 1 stated:

We are not usually bringing anything to a halt. Usually then the behavior would tend to halt the academics and that does tend to happen. Everyone else is able to continue learning or the lesson switches shortly and it is more of a life lesson that is implemented in the middle of an academic lesson and then we are able to go

back to our academic lesson. Because student behavior does not influence the entire classroom we are able to continue teaching and that is how it influences academic success. (P1: E: sE: 18).

Participant 2 characterized the influence as being one of a mindset and a way of being. He explained:

Having come from a school district where there was nothing of this sort in place, being enacted or even discussed, I think overall it raises the standard and the bar is defiantly higher. It is an overall mindset that it does not deal with just one aspect, as with many things there is a ripple effect. What affects behavior will affect and impact academic behavior not just in a social setting but also in an academic setting? So, scholastics or whatever you want to call it, all of that is impacted and anytime a bar is raised in one area, it then begins to be raise if not in an overt manner, then certainly the implication. If students start to be rewarded for their behavior, it starts to spill over in other areas. Not everyone is a scholar, but through rewarding positive behavior you see more of a tolerance for that and less tolerance for being a "slacker" or one who does not wish to put out the effort. (P2: R: cE: 18).

Participant 6 outlined the fact that benefits exist academically because it recognizes students for their citizenship. She stated:

Yes, I do think it affects the academic performance. For instance, we have what is called "Top Cat" it does not necessarily have to do just with academics because it is based on your citizenship and your GPA. Therefore, it is about half-and-half maybe and as long students are getting their good citizenship and good grades

then they get like coupons for the next quarter for doing good things. Because of

PBIS and this program, students are starting to be good citizens as well as keeping

their academics up. (P6: E: pE: 18).

Academic success and discipline issues have had a long-standing correlation and

teachers recognize this obstacle that must be overcome. The teachers believe that when

students feel appreciated, understand what is expected of them, and then are supported

regularly, then academically they are able to gain much more.

Participant 3 describes this process, as he perceives it. He explained:

I always see confidence as a major roadblock with any sort of academic success. I

think having that positive language built in to what we do and using it to reward

students for doing it right thing can help build confidence. I think anytime you

can build confidence and convince people that they are good enough and that they

are smart enough they automatically start doing better. (P6: E: cE: 18).

Participant 5 mirrors the thoughts of Participant 3 describing the importance of

understanding the impact of being positive in a teacher's interactions with students.

Participant 5 stated:

I think that when you get to the high school level, kids have been trained to think

in terms of doing the right thing. I think that the higher you get in education the

more critical we become in children's education. Flipping your response to

children from the negative to the positive is like a chain reaction. That is

something new that I have been doing. I look for something positive when I give

feedback on their papers and work. Finding something positive, putting that at the

top, putting it at the bottom, making some corrections, but always making sure

that they saw how much I appreciate the effort that they put in. Finding

something, some strength in their work that I can highlight and shine. (P5: E sE:

18).

Participant 5 also felt very similarly to Participant 5 and Participant 6 in her

thoughts on the impact academically to students. Participant 7 explains:

I think it puts the spin on the positive and helps us to notice the good in students.

We are able to be more proactive and positive rather than to be retroactive and use

punishment more. For kids that are struggling and have to be put on a plan, there

is much more of a positive aspect to it. I think it is giving them the recognition

that we think they do the work and not that they cannot or teachers are going to

punish. Encouraging the students to do all that they can through a different aspect

rather than the constant negative when you interact with them. PBIS is using a

different facet to get the most out of students. (P7: E: pE: 18).

When answering this question and providing details to describe their thoughts and

feelings, teachers, regardless of their demographic background, unanimously suggested

that having PBIS on their campus and using the program as it was designed improves the

academic performance of the majority of students that they teach. They all expressed that

having the program causes them to be much more positive and proactive with their

students in the classroom. They identified having positive classroom environments as

being very important to the academic success of their students. Participant 4

communicated:

One of the things that works really well in my classroom that is part of that

positive intervention. I like to use laughter to modify behavior. Laughing with

students and not at students is key to building relationships. Students tend to laugh

at me when I correct behavior and it usually works very well with particular

groups of kids. Having the positive relationship helps students' academic success

because they are not afraid to ask me questions. (P4: E: pE: 18).

Part of having a positive classroom environment is having good relationships with

your students. This was corroborated by the responses from the teachers (n=31) on the

PBIS questionnaire and further triangulated from the student referral data. The theme of

Relationships and Rapport emerged from the second interview question.

The second interview question was: How do you think teachers react to the PBIS

behavior management system at your school? This question sought to determine the

perceptions of teachers on how well received the PBIS system is by all teachers at the

participant high school and to what fidelity is the system being practiced. Results from

the student referral data demonstrate a decline in the overall number of referrals from

2011-2012 to 2012-13 and then remained nearly the same for school year 2013-14.

Responses from teachers represented a connection to students and a way of being at the

participant high school. Teacher buy-in and teacher effectiveness with the use of the

PBIS program were described in detail. The role that each teacher plays in using the

program effectively and with fidelity was also described. Participant 7 stated:

To be honest, we have been doing this for so long, I don't think that anybody even

realizes we have anything other than this. I don't hear any negative feedback and

we have already done it this way for most people. I never hear any complaining

about the program mainly because I think there is a lot of buy in. (P7: R: bR: 15).

Every year the administration puts up the statistics and those statistics show us

how we are doing, but also gives us the data that proves success. The data also

demonstrates that the program is working and improves its success each year they

have used it. The student referral data is what increases buy-in for the teachers.

(P7: R: mR: 18).

Participant 3 also felt very similarly to teachers 7. Having been on the participant

high school campus for six of the years that the PBIS program has been in place, he

explained teacher acceptance and use as engaging. Participant 3 explained:

I think teachers are all very open to PBIS and that students are also engaged.

They believe in it and work towards it. I don't know if any teachers complain

that it is an extra thing we have to do. I think we all agree with the validity and

are all overall on board with it. The staff is bought into the system and uses it

regularly. (P3: R: cR: 11).

Teachers explained that the success of the PBIS program, as with the success of

any program, the people using it must believe in it and must support the efforts. The

participant high school has been using PBIS for nine years now and teachers in this study

have been using the program for a minimum of four to six years. The self-perceptions of

the teachers on teacher buy-in and support were reflected very positively and the teachers

in their responses to this question described the relationships that exist with students due

to the programs existence. Participant 1 describes her experience with the program and

the influence it has on building student relationships. Participant 1 stated:

I think overall most are very positive. Overall I would say that the entire campus

is on board because the students also respond more positively. It is not just that

we are being more respectful to students, it also encourages students to be more

positive toward us, so it is mutual. It is neat that it is safe enough and comfortable enough and an encouraging enough environment that students feel comfortable coming to talk to us as teachers. (P1: R: mR: 18).

While all teachers, regardless of demographic difference, were able to articulate the buy-in of the staff and the benefits the program has had on building very positive relationships with their students, the two most veteran teachers in terms of years of teaching experience, also felt like the buy-in of the teaching staff may have differed slightly depending on how long they have been teaching. Participant 2 stated:

In me perspective, I would think the older teachers have a little more of a difficult time and are more resistant to the program. I will be honest I am old school in that regard because that is how I came up through the system and it wasn't necessarily accepted. For younger teachers, they probably think that the PBIS program is just how teachers interact with students today and at least think that way. I feel like the younger teachers had an easier time adapting to the philosophy behind the program. (P2: R: dR: 15).

Participant 4 also felt like while teachers are bought in to the program at the participant high school that that buy-in comes a little differently, depending on how long a teacher has been teaching. She detailed that buy-in in her response and explained a little further. According to Participant 4:

The old ones close to retirement think it is just another swing of the pendulum and the middle ground ones kind of watch it with skepticism and they do it but until you see it actually work they don't have full buy in. (P4: R: bR: 15).

She went on to explain,

Newer teachers just assume that is the way schools are, the middle teachers will

apply it but don't really buy into it until they see it work and the older teachers

just say it is another transition, just go with it and do what it is and they do. A lot

of those teachers do it, but just don't know what they are doing is part of that

labeling that defines the program. (P4: R: cR: 11).

The extent of teacher buy-in and the fidelity in which teachers use the PBIS

program differed just slightly by the two more experienced teachers. However, the

common theme that emerged from their responses to this interview question demonstrates

that all teachers value the PBIS program and are able to articulate the positive

relationships and rapport they have with their students because of it. According to

Participant 6:

Yes, I do think that PBIS effects academic performance. For instance, we have a

program that is called *Top Cat.* To be a *Top Cat* does not necessarily have to do

with just academics because the program focuses on citizenship as well as GPA.

Teachers like this program because the use of the program as a part of the PBIS

program, students are starting to be good citizens as well as keeping up their

academics. That helps to promote teacher buy in. (P6: R: bR: 15).

Participant 5 is a part of the schools Freshmen House that is a program dedicated

to the incoming freshman to their school and shared the following:

Gosh it is hard to speak for anybody other than the Freshmen House. The

Freshmen House is unique because it is a very strong foundational start to school.

There are a lot of things we do to build positive behavior in freshmen. Whether it

is the *Commitment to Graduate Program* or having an assembly just for

freshmen, we use a very positive approach. In the Freshman House teachers all

have the same goals, which include PBIS to help establish a foundation for the

rest of their next three years. (P4: R: cR: 11).

While all four themes that emerged from this study had almost equal percentages

of sub theme responses, the strongest theme of this study emerged from the interview was

a positive school climate. Responses from the teachers (n=31) on the PBIS questionnaire

and the student referral data that was analyzed both corroborated and triangulated this

theme.

The third interview question was: Do you believe that there are benefits to you

personally that exist from having the PBIS behavior management system in place your

school? All seven teachers, regardless of years of experience were unanimous in feeling

that the PBIS system being in place benefits each of them as individuals because they

implement the program on their campus. The teachers were able to describe how having a

student behavior management system in place on their campus improved the quality of

life for each of them personally. While they all agreed that there were indeed benefits for

each of them individually, those benefits differ slightly from each of the teachers'

personal perspective.

According to Participant 1:

I think it is one of those benefits that been around for years with us that it is not

always having to be a conscious thought. It has now moved to some of the

subconscious on how people approach things because it has been here long

enough. So it is just a part of the way we are and it is really neat of course

whenever you get a brand new teacher because everything is so new. They ask

tons of questions and they are reminded you of the practices that are just given.

People here are very calm when they are frustrated and none of the adults lose

their cool, which is a wonderful thing. (P1: B: sB: 11).

Participant 6 shared the following:

For the most part teachers react very positively. I have never heard any negative

feedback from them. Coming from a school that didn't have PBIS to one that

does, you completely see the difference. Everything is not punitive and I feel like

we have more things that are positive than are punitive. They may not realize this

as students, but it pushes them towards that track of doing good and getting

rewarded for doing what they are supposed to do. (P6: R: bR: 15).

Participant 7 went on to elaborate further and explained:

As a teacher, it puts me on a more positive side with her students and it gives all

teachers and students a more common language to use. Because students know

what the expectations are and teachers are all using the same language, there is no

ambiguity. I like the fact that we come at things from a different facet and try to

be more proactive about issues with students and not just hammering or punishing

students. It is much more respectful to students and being positive is good for

everyone. (P7: B: vB: 16).

Participant 3 echoed similar thoughts on this question. He shared the following

perspective:

I personally believe that our classrooms have very little behavioral issues   that

occur in them. Our school is a very positive environment where there is a

foundation of mutual respect and understanding between teachers and students.

Our general stress level goes down and we actually get to teach and spend less time managing behavior which teachers value. Ultimately, I think as a teacher it provides a good classroom environment that is more based on academics and it makes decisions a little easier. (P3: B: tB: 20).

Teacher teachers shared their insights on the great deal of pressure teachers have to endure to guarantee that quality education is taking place in their classrooms and that they must prepare their students for academic success on high stakes testing. This pressure can lead to teachers feeling very stressed.

According to Participant 4:

I like the fact that just because a kid is misbehaving they don't automatically get a referral and think of themselves as a bad kid. Having the PBIS program makes it easier because there is an outline and everything doesn't have to escalate to a big deal, which takes some the pressure off my back. (P4: B: sB: 11).

Once students understand the expectations set before them because teachers are using a common language and management system, the pressures that teachers feel can be greatly reduced. Participant 2 explained:

I would say that there are benefits in the classroom simply because many of the behaviors that I have seen before that I had to deal with on a regular basis are being addressed. I don't see nearly the number of cases or kinds of cases here. I came from a huge intercity school where you would expect stereotypical issues to exist. I think that a large part of our success here is that you see the same type of values coming from the home that are being practiced here and the result is the

two feed each other who are vying for a better foundation or better overall experience. (P2: B: vB: 16).

Participant 5 shares very similar thoughts regarding personal benefits of having PBIS in place:

There are definitely benefits to me personally. What I have noticed after five years of teaching with PBIS in place is that the "clown" can keep you from getting to know the rest of the kids and I hate that. I go home at night and reflect and think. Did I get a chance to connect with every student? They all have their own stories and they all have their own issues. For me, it helps to instead of allowing the power to be in the hands of "clowns" I can focus on the positive behavior of other students and that settles my heart and my nerves down. (P5: B: sB: 11).

Participant 6 also felt that there were definitely benefits to them personally and shared the following thoughts:

Because our students know that PBIS exists, they might do things just in case they would earn a *Phat Cat* card. They are going to do the extra stuff to positively impact the classroom. I benefit personally because students are more willing to be helpful and are much more positive in general. (P6: B: tB: 20).

Responses from the teachers (*n*=31) on the PBIS questionnaire and the student referral data that was analyzed confirmed the teachers perceptions.

The fourth interview question was: What impact does the PBIS behavior management system have on your school climate? The general focus of this entire study is described in detail through student responses to interview question number four. This

question focuses on the influence that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of their school climate. Each participant described school climate as a feeling that employees have about how they feel personally about being at the place the place that they work. While there was a great deal of information to support their thoughts and feelings about their place of employment, having a positive school climate was the emerging theme that was derived from this interview question. The effectiveness of the PBIS behavior management system had a great deal of influence on how these teachers feel about their school. All seven teachers were able to articulate their own personal perspectives about their school climate and explain how the PBIS program plays into those perceptions. Participant 4 shared:

Because of PBIS there is a more friendly relationship between students and teachers, which leads to a positive school climate. Students don't hesitate to interact with teachers and that makes the environment we live in much more positive. I have seen the difference being positive has made, even with such a big campus. We have always wanted to have positive relationships with our kids and with PBIS being here there are a lot more opportunities to have those types of interactions with kids outside of your class. (P4: C: sC: 16).

Participant 6 echoed that thinking and stated:

I think PBIS makes the school more positive in general. The kids really don't know what is going on, but we are pushing them toward being more positive and making good decisions. Everything just seems to be more positive here. Students want to do good and they approach things differently because they know we expect the positive in them. (P6: C: hC: 15).

All seven teachers, regardless of demographic differences, described their school climate as being a very positive and all seven teachers explained that the PBIS system has played a big role in achieving the current school climate that exists. Each participant had something to add about the influence that PBIS has on his or her school climate. Participant 5 explains the relationship as:

I think we do a really good job of incorporating the best of what our school has to offer and blending those ideas. The PBIS system whether it is used in classes, with staff for students, or with staff for staff, it is effective with is groups on campus. To me that is a big deal when you can break the barriers and find the commonality in people instead of finding the differences and building up the walls. I think that is what make our campus so successful is because it includes so many different aspects of our campus. (P5: C: gC: 17).

Teachers had no problem relating PBIS and the way they interact with students to the way they feel about being at work. They described the majority of their interactions as being those of the positive nature and in turn they related those positive relations as being a large part of having a positive school climate. Participant 3 explained:

I think people like to be here at our school more because of the PBIS program. You know on a certain level, school is still school and there is a certain level of that here. I think we have a positive environment here and that most people are happy to be here. I think we have a common language that we speak here. Anytime you have a common vision it makes collaboration and decision-making easier for our staff. (P3: C: cC: 12).

Participant 7 and Participant 1 both shared similar perceptions:

Participant 7 stated:

As far as I perceive things, PBIS makes our school a much happier place and we

have a much more positive climate here at our school. We notice the things that

are good and again we have a shared language we use. To be honest, I don't have

a lot of student behavior issues in my classroom. Everything is very common and

it is all understood by teachers and students alike. (P7: C: cC: 12).

Participant 1 elaborated further:

We only have a handful of teachers who really examine our data with our

administrations, but they always communicated how well we are doing. Overall

we have a very positive environment and even our security guards are positive.

They have a tough job, yet they are still able to handle things in positive manner

and they go through those steps. None of the adults on our campus lose their

cool, which is wonderful. (P1: C: hC: 15). She stated further, Relationships are

so positive that even in the middle of a frustrating situation or discipline issue the

adults are still able to joke with students and talk with students and not at them. I

feel that part of our climate is due in large part to PBIS as well. (P7: C: sC: 16).

Teachers were able to articulate their positive feeling about working at the

participant high school and shared that the more positive that employees find their place

of employment, the better job they do for the students themselves. Participant 2 was able

to reflect and articulate the general feeling of the teachers about their school. Participant

2 explained:

The positive school climate I would argue that PBIS is a necessary ingredient

for the success that we have had at the participant high school and the overall

attitudes and environment that also exists. Teachers are willing to do whatever is necessary and are willing to put in maximum effort if it will help students. I feel that because of PBIS being in place, that teachers' at the participant high school do not face a lot of the trials and tribulations that they might if it did not exist. I think that PBIS may not be the only reason for that, but it certainly has been one of them and has played a very large role in that regard. (P2: C: cC: 16).

All four interview questions effectively allowed teachers to express their personal perceptions and feeling about how PBIS has positively influenced their high school campus. Participant were able to articulate how the PBIS student behavior management system influenced their students' academic success, how PBIS being in place benefited themselves personally and how PBIS has indeed contributed to teachers' perceptions of their own school climate. Responses from the teachers (n=31) on the PBIS questionnaire and the student referral data that was analyzed both corroborated and triangulated this theme.

Summary

Seven teacher interviews, questionnaire data (n=31), and longitudinal referral data was studied to explore how PBIS influenced teachers' perceptions on school climate within the participant school. Each participant was purposefully selected to participate in this study based on years of teaching experience at the participant high school and gender. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face in his or her own natural environment and had been teaching at the participant high school for a minimum of four to six years post-PBIS implementation. Through analysis of six years of total referrals and three years of longitudinal student referral data, PBIS teacher questionnaire data and

participant responses to four open-ended interview questions, data was coded and four themes emerged as patterns from responses by all seven teachers. The themes of positive classroom environment, respect, personal benefits, positive school climate and sub-themes of confidence, high standards, proactive approach, mutual respect, comfort, buy-in, data driven calming effect, limited disruptions, shared values, notice the good, happiness, common language were validated and supported by the responses from the general teaching staff to the PBIS teacher questionnaire. The PBIS behavior management system may have played a role in the influence of teacher perceptions and may be linked to how teachers felt about their own school climate. From the themes and sub-themes, the analysis of data and research question focused on the self–perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness, responsiveness, and overall influence that the PBIS system has had on the participant high school campus. Using student referral data, teacher questionnaire data, interview transcriptions, and field notes, the emergence of themes was coded and developed. Continuous member checking with teachers themselves added additional validity by allowing for accurate analysis and interpretation of the data.

Making the decision to implement a schoolwide behavior system at a school is not done easily. There must be a great deal of research and analysis done to find the program that best fits a school and their needs. Through the triangulation of interviews, a PBIS teacher questionnaire and six years of student referral data, the results of this study may benefit school leaders who are considering implementation of the PBIS behavior management system. The deep, rich data that has been presented may assist a school leader in gaining an understanding on how and why those programs may influence school climates as perceived by teachers. Important to PBIS, this study provided a different

approach in trying to understand what having a schoolwide student behavior management system in place does for the teachers themselves who are implementing the program. A summary of this study, the findings, and conclusions is presented in Chapter 5. Additionally, Chapter 5 will discuss the implication and recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

While it is not known how PBIS influence high school teachers' perceptions on school climate, PBIS and other schoolwide student behavior plans continue to be used by schools and school leaders to improve student behavior in the classroom, while attempting to improve accountability for personal misbehaviors. In an effort to help change unwanted student behaviors, schools continue to use student referrals as a means of documenting student misbehaviors so that the school can have a better understanding of what student behavior issues are happening on their campus. Many schools have to turn to PBIS as a means to take a more positive approach to changing student misbehaviors. Results from previous research studies have addressed schoolwide student behavior plans and student behavior outcomes as a means to improve the quality of education. This study focused on the influence that PBIS has on teacher perceptions of school climate in regard to four factors that contribute to creating school climate— student academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits to teachers, and the culture.

Important to the field of schoolwide student behavior programs and school climate, this study attempted to add to the limited amount of research that exists in regards to the influence that PBIS has on teacher's thoughts and feelings about their school climate. A qualitative interpretive study exploring PBIS's influence on teacher perceptions, data collection included seven teacher interviews, 31 questionnaire responses, and longitudinal archived data. This study took place over a four-week period to provide insight to how the PBIS student behavior management influences teachers' self-perceptions of their school climate. Field notes, digital recordings, face-to-face

interviews, a PBIS teacher questionnaire, and six years of longitudinal student's behavior data were collected and analyzed to determine the findings for this study. The remainder of this chapter identifies and addresses the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research and educational practices.

Summary of the Study

In order to identify the effect that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of school climate, this study investigated the self-perception of teachers who have experienced and used PBIS on their school campus for a minimum of four years. The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore the influence that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of their school climate. The findings of teachers' self-perceptions of school climate were explored through their individual perceptions of the influence that PBIS had on student academic success, teacher buy-in to the program, personal benefits to teachers themselves, and the culture that was created that all make up the schools climate.

One research question guided this study to provide the framework of exploration for this study. Throughout this study seven teachers' perceptions of how much having PBIS in place at their school influenced how they felt about their own school climate. In order to understand the benefits or influence that PBIS has on school climate, the factors or areas that make up school climate were analyzed. Demographical differences that existed amongst the seven teachers were also described to further add to the richness of this study. The responses from the seven teachers' interview questions were compared with the thoughts and perceptions of the general teaching population to further examine the influence that PBIS has on school climate. To understand the influence that PBIS has

on teacher perceptions of school climate, this study followed a qualitative approach for research.

This qualitative interpretive study allowed the researcher to gather data based on the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the teachers. The interpretive study design allowed the researcher to interact with teachers in their own natural environments in an effort to better understand their feelings. Teachers for this study were selected through purposeful selection based on their responses to an electronic demographic survey. Data collection consisted of interview responses from teachers that were digitally recorded and transcribed, field notes, six years of longitudinal student referral data, a PBIS teacher questionnaire provided by the teachers themselves. Analysis that was conducted through open-coding constant comparative analysis provided for the emergence of four themes and 14 sub-themes.

The four themes that emerged from the self-perceptions of teacher teachers consisted of (a) classroom environment, (b) respect and rapport, (c) personal benefits, and (d) school climate. Additionally, each of the four themes had sub themes that also emerged. Sub-themes of classroom environment were: 1) confidence, 2) high standards, and 3) proactive approach. Respect and rapport consisted of: 1) mutual respect, 2) comfortable, 3) buy-in, and 4) data driven. Personal benefits were further defined as: 1) stress level, 2) limited disruptions, and 3) shared values. School climate consisted of: 1) good people, 2) happiness, 3) common language, and 4) school culture and climate.

Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive summary of the qualitative interpretive study in addition to how the study results related to current literature and what is known about

PBIS, how the research question was answered, and how the theoretical framework was supported by the data collection and analysis of that data.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The conclusions and findings from this study were consistent with much of the literature while addressing the specific gap. It is not known how PBIS influences teachers' perceptions about their school climate. From three sources of data, the research question related to the emerged themes of school climate. Distinct theories about how and why teachers' self-perceptions of the influence of PBIS on school climate were identified. Each of the seven teachers stated that they believed that having the PBIS behavior management system in place on their campus influenced the factors contributing to school climate in a positive manner. All teachers agreed that having PBIS in place on their campus improved the academic success of their students, had personal benefits to themselves as teachers, and created the positive school culture and climate that is in existence at their school. The only factor of school climate that had any discrepancy or difference in opinion was with teacher buy-in. Two of the seven teachers felt like buy-in for more experienced teachers might be slower to buy-in to the program and need to see proven success before completely getting on board. Through the triangulation of longitudinal student referral information, PBIS teacher questionnaires, and responses to interview questions, rich descriptive data presented itself. The summary of the findings and conclusions guided this study's research question: How does Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) influence high school teachers' perceptions of school climate?

The results indicated that the teachers did feel that having the PBIS program in place contributed to their own self-perceptions of their own school climate. School climate was broken down into four major components, which included students' academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits, and culture and climate of the school. School climate is defined as the collective feelings that both students and teachers have about the environment in which they interact. In an effort to explore the research question further, school climate was examined based on these four factors that each contribute to the overall feelings or perceptions of individuals.

The first interview question was: How do you feel the PBIS behavior management system influences the academic performances of your students? Students' academic success can be greatly influenced by disruptions in the classroom and other distractions that may come from misbehaving students. Teachers in this study all believed that having PBIS in place on their campus both influenced and influenced their own students' academic success in their classrooms. Participant 2 had this to share:

It is an overall mindset that it does not deal with just one aspect, as with many things there is a ripple effect. What effects behavior will effect and impact will academic behavior not just in a social setting but also in an academic setting? So, scholastics or whatever you want to call it, all of that is impacted and anytime a bar is raised in one area, it then begins to be raise if not in an overt manner, then certainly the implication. (P2: R: cE: 18).

When teachers are free from classroom disruptions and are therefore able to maximize their instructional time in the classroom, students are the direct beneficiaries of good classroom management. Participant 6 added the following comments:

I always see confidence as a major roadblock with any sort of academic success. I think having that positive language built in to what we do and using it to reward students for doing it right thing can help build confidence. I think anytime you can build confidence and convince people that they are good enough and that they are smart enough they automatically start doing better. (P6: E: cE: 18)

The general teaching population agreed with the participant's thoughts and feelings which were demonstrated by their responses to the PBIS teacher questionnaire. In their Likert scale responses, 78% of the responders agreed that having PBIS influences student academic success. They described this influence in the terms of student safety, mutual respect of students and teachers, honesty, and integrity.

In comparison to the six years of student longitudinal referral data, the referral data suggests a decline of student referrals for major incidents over the past three years and the ability of teachers' to feel comfortable enough to be able to handle minor incidents in the classroom further corroborated teacher's perceptions and triangulated the results of this study. As schools and school leaders continue to evaluate ways to improve academic success to meet the high demands in the classroom, PBIS may be a schoolwide student behavior program they should consider. The value of this study for school leaders is that it reflects teachers' perceptions on the influence that PBIS has on increasing student academic success in the classroom.

The second interview question was: How do you think teachers react to the PBIS behavior management system at your school? When measuring effectiveness of any schoolwide initiative, the extent to which teachers' are bought in to the initiative and the fidelity in which they use the initiative weigh heavily on the overall impact that can be

obtained. Highly effective teachers are generally associated with being good classroom managers that are able to command the classroom. Within this study, the teachers share their thoughts and feelings on how teachers on the participant high school campus felt about both having and using the PBIS program. Results from the data demonstrated that teachers for the most part felt that all teachers were bought in to the PBIS program. Participant 1 shared:

> That overall the entire campus is on board because they like having the positivity that it brings. I also feel like the students respond more positively to teachers because teachers treat students with respect. It is not just that we are being respectful to students; it encourages the students to be respectful to us, so, it is mutual. (P1: R: mR: 18)

Participant 7 added, "To be honest, we have been doing this for so long, I don't think that anybody even realizes we have anything other than this" (P7: R: bR: 15).

> However, there was some discrepancy based on the responses of the two veteran teachers. Participant 4 shared her thoughts on teacher buy-in:

> While I feel like teachers are bought in to the program at the Participant high school, that buy in comes a little differently depending on how long a teacher has been teaching. She detailed that buy in in her response and explained a little further. (P4: R: bR: 15).

Participant 4 went on to say:

> The old ones close to retirement think it is just another swing of the pendulum and the middle ground ones kind of watch it with skepticism and they do it but until you see it actually work they don't have full buy in. (P4: R: bR: 15). Newer

teachers just assume that is the way schools are, the middle teachers will apply it but don't really buy into it until they see it work and the older teachers just say it is another transition, just go with it and do what it is and they do. (P4: R: cR: 11).

Data collected from the PBIS teacher questionnaire again supported the responses of the teachers in their interviews. Thirty-one teachers responded to the PBIS teacher questionnaire. Responses from the general teaching staff to this question showed that 27 of those responding (87%) felt that teachers both agreed with and were bought in to the PBIS program. Again, the student referral data further triangulates these findings and demonstrates the relationship that exists in relation to the number of referrals and the total student population at the participant high school. The value of this study demonstrates the possible benefits of a schoolwide behavior management system when the teachers who implement it are both bought in and agreed with the program being implemented. This information is supported by numerous other studies and research done on schoolwide behavior initiatives.

Interview Question 3 was: Do you believe that there are benefits to you personally that exist from having the PBIS behavior management system in place your school? This study began out of a curiosity to find out if there were any benefits at all to teachers themselves when a schoolwide student behavior management was in place at a high school. While there is very little research available to answer this question, the teachers at the participant high school were able to offer their personal self-perceptions regarding its influence. As traditional classroom teachers, the teachers all unanimously agreed that because of the PBIS behavior management being in place at their school, they personally reaped benefits. The teachers all felt like when students are focused and on task in a

classroom that is free from disruptions, then the quality of education happening in that

classroom greatly increases. Participant 6 shared the following statement, "I benefit

personally because students are more willing to be helpful and are much more positive in

general." (P6: B: tB: 20).

Participant 7 elaborated further on the benefits:

As a teacher it puts me on a more positive side with my students and it gives all

teachers and students a more common language to use. Because of that fact I feel

like the program is good for teachers and good for students. Benefits to me

personally come from the fact that students know what the expectations are and

teachers are all talking the same way. I feel like the fact that teachers approach

things from a different facet and try to be more proactive about issues with

students, I benefit by not having to be punitive and punishing kids. I feel teachers

are much more respectful to students on the participant high school campus and

that just that being positive is good for everyone. (P7: B: vB: 16)

The high pressure put on teachers and students alike due to increased academic

accountability and pressure to perform on standardized tests can add a great deal of stress

to teachers in the classroom. All teachers were able to articulate and explain how having

the PBIS program on their campus improved the quality of the work place for teachers

and in some cases decreased the stress level that teachers can sometimes have. Participant

3 explained:

I personally believe that our classrooms have very little behavioral issues that

occur in them. For that reason, I feel there is a very positive environment and a

foundation of mutual respect and understanding between teachers and students. I

also feel like having the program in place causes teachers' general stress level to go down. I personally enjoy being able to actually teach and manage less, which is something that I value. (P3: B: tB: 20).

The general teaching population's responses also support these perceptions and further triangulated these findings. Teachers described the personal benefits as being relational where teachers and students have positive relationships in the classroom. They also describe these relationships as being key to students feeling good about themselves. From the respondents who answered the PBIS questionnaire, 30 of 31 (97%) felt that PBIS being in existence brings personal benefits to teachers themselves. An examination of the types of incidents that occur on the participant high school campus for the past three years, one can see that defiance, disrespect, insubordination, and noncompliance are almost nonexistent with only 10 total incidents occurring over that three-year period. These findings led to a better understanding of how having an effective schoolwide student behavior plan in place increases the personal benefits of the teaching profession for teachers themselves.

Interview Question 4 was: What impact does the PBIS behavior management system have on your school climate? This fourth and final question circles back around to the driving research question that guided this entire study. Responses to the previous questions demonstrated the perceptions of the teachers in this study. Their self-perceptions of the benefits and influence that PBIS has on the first three components of school climate were depicted. From the results of those three questions, it can safely be determined that based on participant's responses regarding the components of school climate, that their responses to this final question would be similar. Teachers

overwhelmingly and unanimously agreed that the PBIS behavior management system being in place on their campus greatly influences the school climate and culture that exist. All seven teachers were able to articulate how PBIS defined their school culture for them as individuals. Participant 1 shared:

> PBIS makes our school a much happier place and we have a much more positive climate at our school. I feel like we all notice the things that are good in people and that we have a shared language, which creates the positive climate at the participant high school. (P7: C: cC: 12).

Participant 7 added:

> People at the participant high school are very calm even when they are frustrated. None of the adults lose their cool, which is wonderful (P1: C: hC: 15). Relationships here are so positive that even in the middle of a frustrating situation or discipline issue the adults are still able to joke with students and talk with students and not at them. I feel that part of their climate being so positive is due in large part of PBIS being in existence as well. (P7: C: sC: 16).

Participant 2 added his thoughts and feelings regarding the influence of PBIS as:

> I would argue that PBIS is a necessary ingredient for the success that we have had at the participant high school and for the overall attitudes and environment that also exists here. I feel like teachers are willing to do whatever is necessary and are willing to put in maximum effort if it will help students. I feel that because of PBIS being in place, that teachers at the participant high school do not face a lot of the trials and tribulations that they might if it did not exist. I think that PBIS

may not be the only reason for that, but it certainly has been one of them and has

played a very large role in that regard. (P2: C: cC: 16).

Responses from the general teaching staff are in line with the thoughts and feeling

that were shared by the teachers. When asked to rank the impact or influence that PBIS

has on the influence of school climate, 31 out of 31 (100%) of all respondents felt that

PBIS directly influences their perceptions of their school climate. Their responses, when

triangulated with the six year longitudinal student referral data, support these findings. In

the third year of collecting student referral data with the PBIS initiative being in place on

the participant high school campus they reported cutting the number of students'

discipline referrals by 40% overall from 2010-11 (759) to 2012-13 (464). Over the past

three school years, the school has continued to demonstrate improvement or maintaining

their efforts. In 2011-12, the school had 617 student referrals. Those numbers decreased

again in 2012-13 to only 464 referrals and then went up just slightly in 2013-14 to 473.

The Chi Square test that was completed comparing total referrals by year and student

population by year for six years, further supports the decrease in student referrals over

time and demonstrates a significant difference that exists across the years. The

triangulation of this rich descriptive data further supports the teachers' responses to this

question. Specifically, the influence that PBIS has on teachers' perceptions of their

school climate has been explained by the teachers themselves and was supported by the

PBIS teacher questionnaire responses. The value of this study was demonstrated through

the triangulation of descriptive data and further validated through the PBIS questionnaire

information responses provided by the teachers themselves.

Implications

From the findings of the research, theoretical, practical, and future implications are implied. These implications assist the research in determining the strengths and weaknesses in studying the influence that PBIS has on the self-perceptions of teachers' about their school climate. This section describes what could happen because of this research. It also tells the reader what the research implies theoretically, practically, and for the future. Additionally, it provides a retrospective examination of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 in light of the dissertation's findings. A critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the study, and the degree to which the conclusions are credible given the methodology, research design, and data, should also be presented. The section delineates applications of new insights derived from the dissertation to solve real and significant problems. Implications can be grouped into those related to theory or generalization, those related to practice, and those related to future research. Separate sections with corresponding headings provide proper organization.

Theoretical implications. Based on the theoretical framework of transformational learning theory described by Mezirow (1997), this study explored the influence that PBIS had on teachers' personal self-perceptions of school climate. Overall, school climate was comprised of four key factors of influence, which included students' academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits to teachers, and the culture and climate of the school. These four factors allowed teachers to articulate the influence that each factor had based on their own personal experiences and to express those thoughts and feelings in relation to the school climate they said existed. PBIS has been in existence for nine years on the participant high school campus and have created a mindset for

disciplining students on that campus. From the findings, teachers experienced positive outcomes in several areas from the PBIS program being in existence. These teachers decision to take ownership of the program and to implement it in their classrooms with fidelity reshaped the influence that the program had on school climate. From the theoretical framework, transformational learning occurred during the implementation and sustained the PBIS program for several years on one high school campus. As educational demands and the implementation of a national formal assessment increases, it is critical that teachers be able to teach without disruptions in the classroom. Based on the findings, to implement and sustain schoolwide behavioral management systems impacts teachers positively in many ways. As educators begin to shift their thinking from focusing on the negative behaviors of students to instead rewarding the positive behaviors of students, transformation in thinking is taking place. While the teachers present the findings of this study favorably, the study conducted was limited to seven teachers who all have experienced or implemented PBIS for at least four to six years.

In comparison to previous thoughts and ideas about schoolwide behavioral programs, there are similarities and differences that will add to the growing literature of schoolwide student behavioral management systems. Warren et al. (2006) stated that in an effort to meet these demands and to ensure that every student receives the quality education they deserve, schools and school districts have turned to schoolwide behavioral plans that outline the expectations that they have for their students. Along this same line of thinking, Coffey and Horner (2012) shared that the PBIS model or approach for changing behavior uses systems of change methodology in an effort to minimize individual student's problem behaviors, increase the quality of education, and also

increase the likelihood that students will be academically successful. Additionally, further research exists that suggests that the understanding of the impact of choosing the correct behavior program for the school that is implementing it can also have its challenges. According to Miramontes et al. (2011), criteria for evaluating behavioral support programs is a moving target. One such criterion is the teachers themselves who are responsible for the implementation of the program. How teachers feel about the program, their willingness to participate, and the benefits they see from the program all drive program effectiveness. In complex educational settings, educators may feel overwhelmed with promised results from behavioral plans that can be implemented (Miramontes et al., 2011).

Teacher perceptions on the influence of a number of schoolwide initiatives have been the focus of much research in an effort to determine the impact that can be made on teachers themselves in relation to those programs. According to Kim (2011), in an effort to be successful in a time of continuous school reforms, the abilities of educators to manage student behavior effectively is key to academic success. Oswald et al. (2005) further explained it has been determined that students who feel valued and trusted at their school are more likely to have high academic success than those students who feel a sense of disconnect to their school. Trying to understand the influence that exists can best be done though a qualitative approach. According to Mertens (2010), qualitative research requires the collection of data at the site where teachers experience the issue or problem being studied. Since perceptions are based on individual thoughts and feelings, it will be necessary to use interpretive inquiry to understand what teachers' are feeling.

In their study, Wagstaff and Williams (2014) examined specific design features of an interpretive phenomenological analysis study. Their research solidifies the notion that a qualitative interpretive study explores the sense that participants make of their personal and social worlds. Through a natural inquiry approach, this study sought to understand if an influence exists between PBIS and teachers' perceptions of school climate in their own natural setting. The results of this study indicated that regardless of demographic differences of teachers, teachers felt strongly that PBIS had indeed influenced their own self-perceptions about their school climate. However, since the collection of interview data was done through electronic surveys and face-to-face interviews, the researcher did not directly observe teachers in their classrooms. From the results of this study, PBIS may influence the factors contributing to school climate in a positive manner and thus improve feelings about school climate. The results of this study provide depth to the insights of how and why teachers feel PBIS influences their perceived school climate. The results of the teachers' responses to interview questions, responses to the PBIS teacher questionnaire, and analysis of longitudinal student referral data defined teacher perceptions of their school climate.

Practical implications. The data from this study also reveals practical implications. Based on responses from the semi-structured interviews, the PBIS teacher questionnaire, and three years of student referral data, the data collected both validates and advances the current research. These advances are primarily concerning teacher self-perceptions of the influence that PBIS has on their own school climate, which may provide practical applications worthy of future research. Improving school climate for teachers through improved student behavior is the primary focus of the findings for

implication. According to Gregory et al. (2012), school climate is a multidimensional construct that exists but cannot be captured by any specific indicator or global measure. Teachers in this study were interviewed in their own natural environment and data were collected over a four-week period. Just like any other high school, at the participant high school the climate of the school is created through many different subgroups that exist within the same educational organization. According to Gunbayi (2007), climate can be defined as the factors that influence the attitudes, beliefs, and values that motivate people whom work within that organization. No teachers in this study were new to PBIS and its benefits for the students they teach in their classrooms. Since all teachers had used PBIS for a minimum of four years, they were readily able to articulate the benefits that existed for students from the programs existence. However, they had not taken the time to rationalize how this behavior management program might benefit teachers themselves. With the increased demands of a national curriculum and high stakes testing, the teachers were able to focus on the importance of student academic success. Teachers in an educational environment have a variety of obligations that they must meet in their profession (Shurden et al., 2010).

Schools that are looking to explore the implementation of a schoolwide behavior management system will need to research the various programs that exist for use. According to Engels et al. (2008), several studies have demonstrated the crucial influence on school culture as well as the way that teachers perceive their school culture. In congruence with these ideas, schools and school leaders must focus on improving the quality of education for both students and teachers alike. As the organizational leader of a school, the school principal plays a significant role in creating the climate of their school

(Marler et al., 2012). The results indicated by this research will assist school leaders in understanding possible benefits for students as well as their teachers themselves from having an effective schoolwide behavior plan in place.

It can be determined from this study that having a consistent school leader in place who has developed consistent expectations for faculty and students, the results of those efforts can lead to a much more positive school climate for the entire school as a whole.

Future implications. In addition to the practical implications, studying the influence PBIS has on teachers' self-perceptions of school climate creates implications on future research that can be based on what the study did or did not do. Findings from the study determined that having PBIS in place and utilized effectively for a sustained period, did indeed positively influence teachers' perceptions about their school climate. Teachers in this study believed that having PBIS in place on their campus influenced their own perceptions of school climate more positively and also believed that having the program may have also influenced in a positive manner their students' academic success, had positive benefits to themselves personally, and led to greater teacher buy-in. However, the level of teacher buy-in may be falsely portrayed in the findings. At least two of the teachers felt like the level of buy-in by all teachers could be slightly different based on the number of years they have been teaching. Additional findings from the PBIS teacher questionnaire also indicated that there might be a slight variation in teacher buy-in.

Important to the findings of the study, transformative learning theory defined by Mezirow, provided the framework for this study. Success of a program is dependent on a

person's ability to change or improve their values and beliefs about something. When this is accomplished, transformational learning occurs when an individual is able to buy-in to the beliefs of that program in order to grow, learn, or change (Mezirow, 1997). Strength from the findings is that all teachers unanimously were able to identify the positive influence that a schoolwide student behavior management had on the components that make up their school climate. The consistent use of a schoolwide behavior program offered the teachers an effective tool for managing their students. However, this study only focused on the self-perceptions of teachers as they related to the influence that PBIS has on school climate. Teachers believe that PBIS positively influenced their school climate through responses to interview questions, responses to the PBIS teacher questionnaires, and six years of longitudinal student referral data. However, the positive impressions the teachers have about their students and the benefits to themselves and their school climate may be more associated with their own perceptions or expectations rather than the PBIS program itself, not demonstrating causality. These findings only provided the thoughts and perceptions of the seven teachers and the 31 of the general teaching population who chose to participant in this four-week study. Future implication would require research in support of more than one high school or other grade level schools when exploring the influence of PBIS on school climate. This would require using qualitative and quantitative data as a means to identify and determine the level of influence a program has through a thorough evaluation of that program. Furthermore, this study did not seek to understand the thoughts and feeling of teachers with less than four to six years of experience using the PBIS initiative. Another implication would require an understanding of the perceived influence by teachers with more or less teaching

experience than the target group for this study. Based on these findings, the recommendations for future research and practice will be explored to illustrate the need for further understanding of the influence of PBIS on school climate.

Based on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, theoretically, the results from this study demonstrate that when a schoolwide behavior program is in place for an extensive period of time, the positive influence it may have may be far reaching. Important to the significance of this study, the teachers were able to identify and articulate the influence that PBIS had on their students' academic success, teacher buy-in, personal benefits, and the overall culture and climate that exists on their school campus. Allowing teachers to self-reflect throughout this study became a significant advantage to share how they felt. However, electing only to use seven teachers to represent 125 teachers also offered a weakness to the study. With only a few teachers who had a great deal of experience with the PBIS behavior management system reduced the ability to explore differences in self-perceptions by teachers with less experience with the program.

The strengths that surfaced as a direct result from this study surfaced around semi-structured interviews, face-to-face interactions, and the PBIS teacher questionnaire. Teachers were able to discuss accurately their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on the various influences that PBIS had on the components that make up school climate. By allowing teachers to speak openly about how they each personally felt about the PBIS program demonstrated the most significant advantage for the teachers themselves.

Recommendations

This qualitative interpretive study offers several recommendations that may lend themselves to improve future research on the influence that PBIS might have on teacher

perceptions of school climate. These recommendations may provide new information in areas on how to evaluate further the influence that PBIS might have on school climate. These recommendations will provide insight for further research and future practices from using a schoolwide behavior management plan and how its use might influence teachers' perceptions about their school.

  Recommendations for future research. These recommendations were developed from the summary of the findings that were presented in the previous sections. From the findings of this study, four future studies have been recommended that may add to the significance to the field and as natural extensions to fill the gaps that exist in the literature. Furthermore, the method of this study is also suggested for future research. These recommendations are based solely on the findings of the study, which found that PBIS did positively influence teachers' perceptions of their school climate.

  Teachers for this study met the criteria for being purposely selected based on the number of years they have been teaching at the participant high school. The teachers for this study have been teaching at the participant high school from four to six years and are very familiar with the PBIS student behavior management system since they have used it for a minimum of four to six years. Extending the same study to teachers with less than four years' experience with the PBIS program may produce different findings. Through maintaining a qualitative approach the thoughts, feeling, and beliefs about the influence that PBIS has on the factors that contribute to school climate may be similar or very different than those originally selected. Furthermore, the findings of this study may reflect more raw knowledge about the program since the participant will not be as knowledgeable as to how to use it.

The other factors that can also influence the way teachers perceive school climate such as school leadership were not addressed in this study. The school principal has been in place for the past thirteen school years prior to this school year. This school year there is an interim principal in place until mid-year and then a new principal will be appointed in January. A future study utilizing quantitative research that examines the different factors that can also determine how teachers feel about their school may provide a more statistical analysis of the influence that each of those factors may have on the overarching theme of school climate. Considering that the school leadership and classified support staff who can influence school climate were not included in this study, a formal evaluation of the entire schools perceptions might lend itself to a more thorough examination of the influence PBIS actually has.

The literature review that informed the development of this study focused on school issues that impact or influence school climate in the world of education. The participants for this study were full-time teachers who have been on the same campus with the same school leader for at least the past four years. All participants were teachers on the school campus and all have experience with classroom management strategies. A future recommendation for research involves repeating this qualitative interpretive study with a sample of all staff members on a school campus. Certified staff members, such as secretaries, security guards, food service workers, and facilities members, would have a more complete picture of all staff members' perceptions of the influence that PBIS has on school climate.

Another recommendation for research involves exploring how teacher participants within a particular school setting perceive their school leadership and the influence they

have on school climate. That study would also include discovering what aspects of school leadership are perceived as being positive and which are perceived more negatively. The research would employ some of the same surveys, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews used for this study, but would focus more on school leadership that is on a schoolwide behavior program to build on the converging line of inquiry.

One qualitative study cannot adequately investigate teacher perceptions of their own school climate. The researcher recommends that this study be replicated or that other aspects surrounding school climate be studied. For example, since school climate can be influenced by school leadership, district initiatives, and other political factors that impact teachers, this researcher recommends that more than one factor surrounding school climate be researched simultaneously. The participants for this study were all experienced teachers who have used the PBIS program for at least four consecutive years. They have seen the decrease of student referrals first hand and have used the PBIS program effectively. All participants have worked under the same school leader who had been at the school since the inception of the PBIS program. Because they think highly of their school leader and will follow her recommendations, their perceptions regarding their school climate may be tainted. Thus, future research might include more quantitative and qualitative inquiries exploring the connections between school leadership, teacher experience, and student behavior programs.

A fourth recommendation for future work includes a study of school leaders, such as principals and assistant principals, and their understanding of the impact of leadership on school climate. The study would still be qualitative in nature but would utilize a case study design. However, the focus would be to understand what shaped the leadership

style and approach for leadership that are being used and how that compares to teachers

perceptions of their school climate and how leadership ties into their thoughts and

feelings. As a qualitative case study approach, extensive time interviewing participants

and gathering elaborate field notes would lend itself to better understanding those

perceived feelings of the participants interviewed.

A fifth recommendation would be to combine qualitative and quantitative

research. A mixed-methods approach may also expand this study's findings by

incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data to look at the influence that exists on

a more large-scale model. The suggestion that would be recommended for a large-scale,

mixed-methods approach would consist of increasing the number of teachers and a larger

variance in teacher experience with the PBIS program. Using results from face-to-face

interviews, responses to the PBIS teacher questionnaires, and demographical differences

amongst teachers, the researcher could begin a statistical analysis of the data that is

collected. The quantitative data from the PBIS teacher questionnaire and the teacher

demographic surveys that used a Likert scale may provide more statistical evidence of the

perceived influence of PBIS on school climate. In this study, pre-implementation referral

data did not exist. A more extensive approach using referral data that are supported from

other sources of data with corroborating evidence will better explain if there were

actually changes in the key outcome variables and whether any changes that might have

occurred can actually be ascribed to the PBIS intervention.

Furthermore, a sixth recommendation for using a mixed–methods approach

extends this research to focus on determining the influence of all factors that might

contribute to influencing school climate be examined. This study used one approach to

attempt to understand the influence of PBIS as perceived by teachers on school climate. However, using a mixed methods approach would allow the researcher to not only identify all the extenuating factors that may lead to teachers' self-perceptions of school climate and through a quantitative approach determine the statistical influence that each factor actually has. Studying the effect of each factor and the impact it actually has on the overall feelings of school climate will give a more complete picture to those who are examining it. This study could also be done in either a high school or a middle school where there are greater influences on how teachers feel.

Recommendations for practice. The findings of this study lends themselves to five recommendations that have been identified for future practice. The first recommendation of practice revolves around increasing teacher buy-in and increasing longevity in their current position at their school. Creating a sense of ownership in the proposed schoolwide student behavior management system by shifting from a relationship of compliance to one of participation by including all stakeholders in the decision-making process. Creating a sense of teacher ownership involves professional development about the program being considered and provides stakeholders with informational data that can demonstrate the benefits of the proposed program being considered. This equates to teachers not only complying with policies and procedures, but also being included in leadership roles and decision-making responsibilities for implementation of the proposed program. PBIS is being effectively implemented in many schools with great success where teachers are included in all facets of the implementation process.

A second recommendation is identifying the actual influence of each factor of school climate by measuring the effectiveness through teachers' feedback and experience with the schoolwide behavior program. With the increase of academic pressure put on students to perform well in the classroom, that same pressure is being put on teachers to deliver quality instruction. Teachers' experiences with a variety of programs that have proven to be effective extend beyond the academic results being achieved by students. Immediate results that can be identified through student/teacher relationships that exist should be used to help guide the direction the school program is going. The experience of teachers as it relates to the practical application and implementation of schoolwide initiatives should be considered. Understanding these relationships and decoding those needs is crucial to a schools success.

A third future recommendation for implementation and practice rely on transitioning away from the traditional methods for disciplining students. In order for this transition to take place, teachers must be willing to increase their communication with students and truly try to understand them. In order to move away from focusing on those students who consistently choose to misbehave to focusing on all of those students who choose to do the right thing regularly is a huge shift in thinking for most teachers. Through the establishment of consistent expectations that are common knowledge and never changing in all school environments, students have a better chance of meeting those expectations and being successful. A teacher's role should be one of consistent mentoring or coaching of students, rather than only focusing on negativity. This can make a significant impact. The significance of that impact greatly influences how both students and teachers alike perceive their school climate. In order to improve teachers'

self-perceptions of their school climate, teachers must feel valued and must have a complete understanding of what is expected of them.

A fourth recommendation for future practice involves a team decision-making process or approach. Involving all key stakeholders in the decision-making process before implementing a new program or idea lends itself to increased buy-in and the overall success of the program being implemented. Before making a decision to implement a schoolwide student behavior program, school leadership should involve a cross section of people to assist in making that decision. A team approach to identifying the needs of the school and sharing the data that will guide the design or program needed and can be a very positive approach to take, but may also have its challenges. Using data as the basis for the decisions being made and for tracking the success of the program being implemented will serve as the basis for the needs of the program. Empowering people to be a part of the decisions-making process demonstrates trust and respect, which in turn lends itself to followers being more loyal and supportive of their leaders.

A final recommendation for future practice is to involve outside and community stakeholders in supporting a schoolwide initiative. Communicating with community members and outside stakeholders in an effort to support a new schoolwide student behavior initiative can be very beneficial to a school leader. Identifying the data that guides the direction the school is moving in and then sharing that information with key stakeholders in the community will assist in gaining community support. That community support can be very beneficial with obtaining items that can be used to reward students for positive behaviors demonstrated at school. Many schoolwide student behavior programs, such as PBIS, use a reward system as a means to focus on students who are

doing the right thing instead of focusing on negative student behaviors. Involving the

community and key stakeholders in the process and success of a schoolwide initiative can

lend itself to creating champions for the school who will support future initiatives when

the time comes.

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Appendix A

Teacher Interview Protocol

Introduction Script

Good morning, my name is Steven C. Bebee, and I am a doctoral student under the direction of Dr. Nicholas Markette with Grand Canyon University. I am in the process of collecting data for the completion of my doctoral dissertation titled, "The Influence of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) on School Climate." The purpose of this interview today is to help me understand how having PBIS on your campus may influence how you perceive your school climate.

My purpose for interviewing you today is to learn your thoughts and feelings about PBIS and how it influences your school climate. Your insights will help me complete my research as well as benefiting other school administrators who are considering implementing a schoolwide discipline program at their schools. Anything you tell me is confidential. Nothing you say will be personally attributed to you in any reports that result from this interview. All of my research and data will be written in a manner so that no individual comment can be attributed to a particular person. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. I am going to use both a digital recorder and hand written field notes to capture your thoughts and feelings so that I do not miss anything you have to share and to ensure the accuracy of what you have told me. You will have the opportunity to review this interview when I have transcribed my notes in order to further ensure validity.

Are you willing to be interviewed at this time and to share your thoughts and feeling with me? Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Teacher Interview Questions

1. How do you feel the PBIS behavior management system influence the academic performances of your students? Please be as specific as possible.

2. How do you think teachers react to the PBIS behavior management system? Please be as specific as possible.

3. Do you believe there are benefits to you personally that exist from having the PBIS behavior management system in place at your school? Please be as specific as possible.

4. What impact does the PBIS behavior management system have on your school climate? Please be as specific as possible.

Possible probing questions

1. How long has this school been practicing the PBIS behavior management system? Have you been involved in PBIS since joining the faculty at this school? Do you have experience with PBIS before joining the faculty at this school? How do you employ PBIS in your own teaching practices?

2. How do you feel the PBIS behavior management system affect your classroom specifically? Please be as specific as possible.

3. How do you feel the PBIS behavior management system affect the school as a whole? Please be as specific as possible.

4. How do you think students react to the PBIS behavior management system? Please be as specific as possible.

5. How would you describe the climate of your school? Please be as specific as possible.

6. What factors contribute most to the school climate? Please be as specific as possible.

Concluding Remarks

Thank you for your participation in my study and for allowing me to interview you today. I want to remind you that everything you shared with me will remain confidential. Once I have transcribed the digital recording from this interview, I will share a copy of my notes with you to ensure what I have recorded and what you shared with me are accurate. I appreciate you time today and your willingness to participate in my study.

Appendix B

Teacher Demographic Survey

1. How many years have you been teaching?

2. How many years have you been teaching at this school?

       1-3   3 – 10   10 -15   15 – 20   21 +

3. What is your highest level of completed education?

   BS/BA   Maters Degree   Doctoral Degree

Any other advanced training certificates or degrees that you would like to describe?

If so please specify:

4. What is your age?

    21 – 30   31 – 40   41 – 50   51- 60   61 – 70   75 +

5. What is your gender?

    Male   Female   Other

Author: Steven C. Bebee

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Grand Canyon University
College of Doctoral Studies
3300 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85017
Phone: 602-639-6106
Fax: 602- 639-7820

CONSENT FORM
TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY
The Influence of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) on School Climate
INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.
RESEARCH
Steven C. Bebee, student researcher at Grand Canyon University has invited your participation in a research study.
STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of the research is to determine if PBIS has any influence on teacher perceptions of their school climate.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, then as a study participant you will join a study involving research of teacher perceptions about school climate and the influence that PBIS may have on those perceptions. Only teachers who have taught at Cienega High School for at least the past three years will be eligible to participate in this study. Teachers will be asked to answer five demographic questions. Based on responses to both number of years teaching at CHS and gender, teachers will be purposefully selected for participation. Teachers will be selected to participate in face-to-face interviews in order to gather information from teachers about PBIS and teacher's perceptions of the school climate. Teachers may choose not an answer a particular interview question and may ask to skip questions they do not want to answer.

If you say YES, then your participation will last for one day at Cienega High School. Approximately 12 -24 subjects will be participating in this study.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the possible benefits of your participation in the research are helping to understand if having a schoolwide behavior plan for students also benefits the teachers who implement the program themselves.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during the study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will provide this information to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Steven C. Bebee will protect participant's anonymity as well as the educational institution; the researcher will assign numbers to teachers and remove all personal identifying attributes from information collected. All teachers for this study will be asked to read and understand the informed consent. The informed consent outlines the teachers of their right to avoid participating and their ability to withdraw from the study at any given time. All information gained from the teachers through interviews and data collected from this study will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive to maintain the chain of evidence until the completion of the research. Data will be kept for a three-year period post research and then destroyed.

WITHDRAWL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or Steven C. Bebee will answer your participation in the study, before or after your consent, by mail at 5636 E. Lonesome Trail, Cave Creek, Arizona 85331 or by phone at 480-353-7238.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, through the College of Doctoral Studies at (602) 639-6106.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form, you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

_____   _____

Subject's Signature   Printed Name   Date

_____   _____

Other Signature   Printed Name   Date
(if appropriate)

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Grand Canyon University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator_____

        Date_____

Appendix D

Coding Descriptions

Coding Description

Example using <u>(P1</u>: <u>A</u> : <u>mR</u> : <u>4)</u>
          1   2   3   4

1 represents the participant in the study:

- P1 participant 1

- P2 participant 2

- P3 participant 3

- P4 participant 4

- P5 participant 5

- P6 participant 6

- P7 participant 7

2 represents the interview question referenced:

- A is for question 1

- B is for question 2

- C is for question 3

- D is for question 4

3 represents the code descriptor (Appendix F)

4 represents the total responses by score from the PBIS teacher questionnaire

Appendix E

Sample Interview

Sample Interview

Interview with Participant 2:

Researcher: How do you feel that PBIS behavior management system influences the

academic performance of your students? Please be specific as possible.

Participant 2:Having come from a school district where there was nothing of this sort in

place or being enacted or even discussed, think over all it raises the standard and the bar

is definitely higher. It is an overall mindset that it does not deal with just one aspect, as

with many things there is a ripple effect. What effects behavior will effect and impact

will academic behavior not just in a social setting but also in an academic setting? So,

scholastics or whatever you want to call it, all of that is impacted and anytime a bar is

raised in one area, it then begins to be raise if not in an overt manner, then certainly the

implication. If students start to be rewarded for their behavior, it starts to spill over into

other areas. Not that everyone is a scholar if you will, but you see more tolerance for that

and less tolerance for the…for lack of a better term, the slacker or one that does not wish

to put for the effort or those that would disrupt that process. It is not as accepted or

tolerated by students to the same extent.

Researcher: How do you think teachers react to the PBIS behavior management system at

your school?

Participant 2: That is a tough one. In my perspective, I would think that the ones who are

older have a little more difficult time and are more resistant to it. Because it is the case of

what my Marines would have called the old core syndrome. You know, the old "When I

was young, we didn't have to do that and we were fine" type attitude. I will be honest, I am old school in that regards because that is how I came up through the system and it was not necessarily accepted, and you will do it because you know it is good for you and if you want to survive to the next day, if your parents found out. So, you don't ever want to give them a reason to bring your life to a shortened halt. For me, that was a bit difficult and I would think that for people my age, or even those who are a little older, it was probably a little difficult to reconcile. I think for younger ones, they probably think that way to a certain extent or are more accepting of it or at least think that way. One advantage I have is because I teach Chemistry and Physics or from a science standpoint it is always the data, which I am sure you are real familiar with that terminology at this point. You have to look at the data, you have to look at the results if the outcome is this, then trace that back. Why is this the case? Why is that the outcome? If things you are working on are better, then why are they better? In that case, if you want to argue with success, you may but it is kind of a fool's error. Personally, wife is now a retired physiologist who introduced me to a book called Everything I know I Learned from a Penguin, which really through me for a loop because it was written by a Pediatric Neurologist. I am thinking what in the heck and it didn't make any sense to me that in stature, what does this have anything to do with a book about a penguin? It turns out the author lives in California and used to go to SeaWorld and still does, and picked up on something that when the want to train their penguins and their otters and sea lions etc. they use PBIS. They reinforce the positive behaviors they want to see and in doing so, they found that this concept works. They don't punish bad behavior, they reward positive behavior until they get what they want and sometimes maybe too much of that, but it

does work. Again, you can't argue with the facts now. I am not comparing my students to marine mammals but that might be too kind for some of them.

Researcher: Do you believe that there are benefits to you personally that exist from having the PBIS behavior management system in place your school? Please be as specific as possible.

Participant 2: I would definitely say that there are benefits in the classroom simply because many of the behaviors that I have seen before that I had to deal with on a regular basis that were constant and ongoing not just for me and all teachers or all teacher in the district were being addressed or referred to. I don't see nearly the number of cases or kinds of cases here and since I came from a huge intercity school where you would expect stereo type and expect these to be issues, I actually came from a rural school district where in the area you could argue that values of that sort were to be expected or are engraved. They were part of the populist and again we are talking going back 7 generation for families that lived there. So, these were people who had very traditional values and deep roots and everything else, but here were still a lot of issues I was surprised that we were facing. Here where you have a more urban or translate population because of the military and type of industry I would expect to see more of that simply because the change that they go through and the lack of spaces in their lives. They live very dynamic lives because their parents or what their parents of what one parent does for a living would show those effects. One would think that if any group were going to show those effects this one would, but they don't. I think a large part of that is that you see the same type of values coming from the home are being practiced here and the result is the two feed each other who are vying for a better foundation or better overall experience.

Researcher: What impact does the PBIS behavior management system have on your school climate? Please be specific as possible.

Participant 2: It is hard to say from a student standpoint because I have never really talked to them about it. But from the faculty standpoint I would say that overall they are, well I can speak mostly from the people in my department since that is whom I interact with the most, they view it in a very positive manner. They feel that overall it is a very useful or if going further very necessary ingredient. I would argue that it is a necessary ingredient for the success we have had and the overall attitudes and the environment we have as well. You rarely hear, and of course there are other reasons for this, in this district and at least here at XYZ you don't here people say, "I can't wait to get home". Not that you aren't tired at the end of the day, but you don't see them the moment the clack hits 3:45 or whatever, that can be out of here. You don't see them in their vehicle and their vehicle rolling through the gate at that particular time. I have seen that and before, where I was told by students, "just wait, so and so their wheels will be hitting the street" and sure enough I was shocked by that. I couldn't imagine their responsibility and they just couldn't wait to get out. Here you will see people, not that they don't have commitment and family obligations, but they realize that there is a, for lack of a better word, obligation that they need to keep the good things going. You want to feed that and so they are willing to put in more time. They are willing to do whatever is necessary and willing to put themselves out there if it will help students. I am sure they would not feel the way they do if it were not for the fact that they don't face a lot of the trials and tribulations that they would otherwise. I think that PBIS may not be the only reason for that, but it certainly has been one of them and has played a very large role in that regard.

Appendix F

PBIS Teacher Questionnaire

PBIS Teacher Questionnaire:
My name is Steven C. Bebee and I am a doctoral student under the direction of Dr. Nicholas Markette with Grand Canyon University. I am in the process of collecting data for the completion of my doctoral dissertation titled, "The Influence of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) on School Climate." The purpose of this questionnaire is to help me understand how having PBIS on your campus may influence how you perceive your school climate. From the results of this questionnaire I will be able to complete my study. Your willingness to participate is greatly appreciated.

1. How much influence does the PBIS behavior management system influence the academic performance of your students?

   1– Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5- A great deal

2. How do you feel that PBIS has behavior management system influences the academic performances of your students? Please be as specific as possible.

3. How well do you think teachers react to the PBIS behavior management system at your

school?

   1 – Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5 – A great deal

4. How do you think teacher react to the PBIS behavior management system at your school?

   1 – Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5 – A great deal

5. How much do you believe that there are benefits to you personally that exist from having the PBIS behavior management system in place at your school?

   1 – Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5 – A great deal

6. Do you believe that there are benefits to you personally that exist from having the PBIS   behavior management system in place at your school? Please be as specific as possible.

   1 – Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5 – A great deal

7. What impact does the PBIS behavior management system have on your school

climate?

   1 – Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5 – A great deal

8. What impact does the PBIS behavior management system have on your school climate? Please be as specific as possible.

   1 – Not at all   2- A little   3- Neutral   4- Somewhat 5 – A great deal

Appendix G

IRB Approval Letter

GRAND CANYON
UNIVERSITY

GCU D-50 IRB Approval to Conduct Research

(IRB initiates form)

Instructions: This form must be signed prior to initiating data collection.

Learner Information

Learner Last Name: Bebee

Learner First Name: Steven

Phone: undefined

GCU E-mail: sbebee01@my.gcu.edu

Title of Dissertation Proposal: The Influence of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) on School Climate

IRB Approval to Conduct Research

Protocol #: 624230-1

Approval Date: 09/05/2014

Office of Academic Research: Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge

Signature: Dr. Cynthia Bainbridge
063BB1524FF044E...

Date: September 8, 2014

Grand Canyon University - College of Doctoral Studies