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Effects of School-Wide Poverty Level on 9-12 Rural Teachers' Perceptions of Six School Culture Components

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EFFECTS OF SCHOOL-WIDE POVERTY LEVEL ON 9-12 RURAL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SIX SCHOOL CULTURE COMPONENTS

by

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

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May 2018

Title: Effects of School-Wide Poverty Level on 9-12 Rural Teachers' Perceptions of Six School Culture Components by Jackwyln Underwood (Under the direction of Dr. Lynette Busceme)

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine the perceptions of teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers' perceptions at schools with moderately low poverty in six areas: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. During this era, schools are focusing on student assessments correlated with poverty level and targeting better instruction as the key to a student's successful learning. Even though more rigor has been pushed through the educational systems, a positive school culture seems to be the key to having a conducive environment where students want to learn and therefore will. In order to have an established, positive culture, several characteristics in the school environment have to be recognized and evaluated starting with the teachers' perceptions of the culture of the school. Although the trend seems to indicate that poverty level is a predominant factor in determining school outcomes, Sagar (2000) stated that schools do indeed make the critical difference

in student learning, nurture is more powerful than nature, and school characteristics are better predictors of student performance than the individual poverty level.

A quantitative, causal-comparative strategy was used in this research with a non-experimental, between-groups design. Six one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) was used to examine the data with a .05 significance level. The *School Culture Survey* was used to collect perceptions of teachers in six rural schools in Arkansas. The survey was given by the school's principal, and data were collected and kept confidential.

Significant differences existed within the areas of Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnership between teachers from moderately high and moderately low poverty schools. Those responding from moderately high poverty schools had significantly lower perceptions on each of these facets of school culture compared to those from moderately low poverty schools.

The success of each student could be significantly influenced by teachers' perceptions of the school where they are employed. Conducive environments should be fostered by schools not only for the students but also for the teachers. Strong teamwork among teachers and administrators should be established. Once teachers feel confident in what is expected in the classroom, student success should come naturally to the educational outcome of the school's overall academic success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

School culture refers to the deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of the school's history and which is understood by members of the school community (Deal & Peterson, 1990a; Schein, 1992). Culture is created within a school over time as teachers, school leaders, parents, and students work together (Peterson, 2002). School culture is constantly being constructed and shaped through interactions with others and through reflection on life and the world in general (Finnan, 2000). The key to successful change in any school is not a change in organizational structure but a change in the school's culture (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991).

Although focusing on the needs of students should be the main priority of all school cultures, the school culture should also support teachers in creating and maintaining that culture. According to The New Teacher Project (2012), when teachers feel supported, both the teachers and students are successful in the school environment. Thus, as teachers' perceptions of each school's culture improve, their productivity for student academic achievement and student social development increases (The New Teacher Project, 2012). A growing number of districts around the country have recognized the power that lies in improving the conditions for teaching and learning that shape school culture (Education Trust, 2012).

According to Hoerr and Morrison (2010), to have a productive educational environment, teachers need to feel wanted and appreciated. Because teachers set the tone of the classroom, an observer can identify the classroom climate within the first few minutes of observation. In addressing teachers as the trendsetters in the classroom, Ginott (1972) noted,

> I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized. (p. 15)

Moussavi-Bock (2012) stated that years of research in education indicate that teachers' beliefs about students and their learning influences the teachers' instructional choices, as well as teacher-student interactions in and out of the classrooms. Beliefs often lead to self-fulfilling predictions, and when teachers feel valued within their school systems, teachers tend to respond positively to students (Moussavi-Bock, 2012). Moussavi-Bock (2012) also stated when teachers do not feel valued, their interactions with students tend to be more negative. Cause and effect are part of human nature, and teachers' perceptions often affect how they respond to others (Sagar, 2000). Ginott (1972) recognized teachers' roles in establishing a classroom climate, implying that how teachers feel about how they are viewed will affect their influence on the learning climate within their classrooms.

Teachers spend more time with students throughout the day than almost anyone else giving them a large degree of potential influence over students' lives, whether positively or negatively. However, teachers are not the only influences in their children's lives. With each decade comes a different set of students with many different learning styles, as well as characteristics that are shaped by constant societal changes and influences. Societal influences can affect everything from instructional choices within schools such as increasing technology use to influences outside of schools such as students being exposed to pressures associated with drugs and alcohol use. One particular influence that has gained much attention is the effects of poverty.

Researchers have questioned how different levels of poverty within school environments affect different aspects of school culture, which includes teachers' perceptions. Although the trend seems to indicate that poverty level is a predominant factor in determining school outcomes, Sagar (2000) stated that schools do indeed make the critical difference in student learning, that nurture is more powerful than nature, and school characteristics are better predictors of student performance than the individual poverty level. Thus, are there significant differences in school culture between moderately high-poverty school settings and moderately lower poverty environments? If there are differences, does a rural setting further negatively exacerbate school culture?

In addition, how should researchers define and quantify culture? Valentine and Gruenaret (2006) studied school culture. They designated six main components to measure school culture: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships. Just as students must be taught coping strategies to deal with different educational techniques,

teachers must also be trained in coping strategies to navigate changes they face in the school environment.

Statement of the Problem

The purposes of this study were six-fold. The purposes of this study were to determine the effects of high school settings with moderately high poverty versus high school settings with moderately low poverty on teachers' perceptions in six areas, each measured by the *School Culture Survey*:

1. Collaborative Leadership
2. Teacher Collaboration
3. Professional Development
4. Unity of Purpose
5. Collegial Support
6. Learning Partnerships

Background

According to The New Teacher Project (2012), successful teachers make successful schools. The report noted that some schools are better than others are at accelerating student learning because they encourage their teachers. They found that this was true even though the schools serve similar populations of students and have access to comparable resources. The report noted that successful schools foster cultures that help teachers and students achieve educational goals. These schools accomplish what others only claim to do because they prioritize positive relationships and effective teaching, above all else. The report went on to warn that, if teachers' perceptions of school are not positive, the classrooms in those schools are not positive. Therefore, if the teachers are

not happy, the culture of the school is not conducive to student learning. Years of education research indicate that what teachers believe about students and learning influences the teachers' instructional choices (Moussavi-Bock, 2012). Research continues to demonstrate that students are not the problem. What matters most are the conditions for teaching and learning within the school culture (Education Trust, 2012). Strong school cultures have better-motivated teachers (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Valentine and Gruenert (2006) isolated six component parts of school culture. They included Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose, and Learning Partnerships. The researchers found that how teachers perceive each of these six components affects their influence on the climate within their classrooms.

Collaborative Leadership

Without positive attitudes, perceptions, and collaborations, students have little chance of learning proficiently, if at all (Marzano, 1992). An effective school culture encourages teachers to work collaboratively with each other and with the administration so that students may learn more (Fullan, 1996). According to Peterson and Brietzke (1994), teachers need to have a supportive, collaborative work environment, and school administrators can be very influential in providing this type of atmosphere. To accomplish this, teachers need to be able to trust the administration and feel that the administration trusts them (Peterson & Brietzke, 1994). Cohen, Cardillo, and Pickeral (2011) stated that when teachers feel appreciated and wanted, they can have professional, caring relationships with their students. One way this trust can be established is through Collaborative Leadership.

When Collaborative Leadership is in place, school leaders establish and maintain cooperative relationships with school staff (Valentine & Gruenert, 2006). Although some principals struggle to help teachers see the need for improvement, other principals do not take school culture, in particular teacher culture, seriously, causing teacher morale and student achievement to suffer. Principals' roles are changing quickly. Now, the principal is not only a building manager but also an instructional leader. The principal leads in the development of teamwork and cohesiveness in the school, but everyone in the school setting should be able to work together to show a determination of teaching and learning.

Teachers need to feel a sense of ownership in school culture, and this can be accomplished through Collaborative Leadership. There is confusion among teachers and principals concerning the importance of student data to improve instruction and the importance of classroom teaching experience (Metropolitan Life Insurance & Harris Interactive, 2013). Principals need to understand that teachers and administrators have different perceptions of the educational arena. Once these differences are recognized, a common understanding can be forged to aid in the improvement of all facets of student education. However, Collaborative Leadership does not function as a component to strengthen just the classroom experience.

Sometimes, factors outside the classroom affect teacher attitudes toward teaching and learning. For instance, with multiple mandates set forth in the educational world, which often have unclear expectations, teachers become indifferent because they feel they must accept these mandates with little input in their implementation. Further, responsibilities and expectations of teachers have changed tremendously in the last 10 years. Non-teaching expectations outside the classroom often increase teachers' stress

levels. In light of these changes, many teachers feel powerless to affect any influence over their work expectations and schedules. According to Costley (2013), new initiatives that are being put in place in education have made the teachers feel apathetic, and this negativity filters down to students' academic performances. Yet, Valentine and Gruenert (2006) viewed Collaborative Leadership as a way to empower teachers and give them a sense of control over the many outside influences that vie for authority over the public school arena. When teachers feel they have a voice in the leadership decisions for the school, teacher morale increases, and as a result, the classroom environment is more conducive to student learning.

Teacher Collaboration

Teachers are widely acknowledged as the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement (Metropolitan Life Insurance & Harris Interactive, 2013). Their roles cannot be overvalued when students' educational success is on the line. However, teachers can develop burnout when they feel they are the only ones experiencing the stress of so many external forces. Teacher collaboration is one key component in guarding against the feeling of aloneness. Teacher collaboration is defined as teachers engaging in constructive dialogue that furthers the educational vision of the school (Valentine & Gruenert, 2006). An effective school culture encourages teachers to work collaboratively with each other and with the administration to facilitate student learning (Fullan, 1996).

Collaboration involves more than simply working together, and a collaborative relationship is more than the enhancement of cooperation and coordination (Adelman & Taylor, 2007). Teacher school-based collaboratives need to be constructed with vision,

policy, leadership, infrastructure, and capacity building ("Enhancing School-Community," n.d.). Working collaboratively also requires establishing clear and concise working relationships that enable teachers to overcome individual agendas and work together with a common vision. The connection between effective teaching and effective leadership is strengthened within a spirited school culture.

School culture is different in each school district, as well as in each building in the school district. A successful culture shift means buy-in from all the teachers in the building because they are the most influential players in this culture change within the classrooms. However, school culture cannot be changed quickly because teacher collaboration takes time. The development of meaningful, functioning relationships that cause a positive cultural shift requires thought, planning, and time to implement. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) noted that teachers who feel they are given the time to build these collaborative relationships would provide a better learning environment in the classroom.

Professional Development

Collaborative leadership and teacher collaboration are not the only components that make up a positive learning culture. To respond to the many differences in students encountered on a daily basis, teachers have to be up to date on how to connect with students and interact with their parents and guardians. Research has shown that quality professional development can change teachers' practices and positively affect teachers' perceptions, which in turn affects student learning (Borko, 2004). In education, continuing professional development is a job-embedded, career-long process, with a learner-focused perspective (de Vries, van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013). Grounded in the

assumption that teacher growth does not happen in isolation, current professional development seeks to create learning communities where participants engage in meaningful activities collaborating with peers to co-construct knowledge about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

An effective school culture fosters an environment where both teachers and students learn (Rosenholtz, 1989). When teachers feel confident about the curriculum and their presentation of curriculum, a passion for learning is shared with the students. Teachers should be lifelong learners and should strive to keep up with the latest research in all aspects of education. Educational reforms are constantly changing the ways teachers teach their students. Some teachers are in favor of reform and embrace it fully; some do not (Costley, 2013). Regardless of their outlook on educational reforms, however, professional development tends to improve teachers' perceptions by providing opportunities for teachers to gain a knowledge base to deal with constant change. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) believed that teachers who feel they are provided with relevant learning opportunities would provide better learning opportunities in their classrooms.

Unity of Purpose

A school's personality is reflective of its culture and includes the mission of the school. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) defined Unity of Purpose as all stakeholders working together for a shared goal. When the administration, faculty, staff, parents, students, and other interested parties are united behind a collective aim, their efforts and persistence toward this aim are the common mission of the school (Ohlson, 2009). To be united in purpose is to have all stakeholders actively involved. Teachers, students, and

parents must understand that the mission of the school is more than just a slogan (Ohlson, 2009). The stakeholders must be able to not only articulate the mission of the school effectively to others but also work toward a common goal. When teachers, and the school community in general, embrace a common mission, the degree of Unity of Purpose increases, making the learning environment more effective and focused. However, there are barriers to being united in purpose.

When teachers feel a Unity of Purpose, they tend to see the different component parts of their school environment as pieces of a bigger picture (Valentine & Gruenaret, 2006). However, when major changes to these component parts occur in a brief amount of time, teachers tend to view them, not as pieces of a bigger picture, but as initiatives working in isolation. At this point, teachers develop frustration with the environment because the collective purpose becomes diluted. These component parts might include curriculum standards, student evaluations, or teacher evaluations within the larger school setting. For example, during 2014-2015 the school year, Arkansas teachers had several initiatives that were implemented in a relatively short amount of time. These included the implementation of the Common Core initiatives, the Partnership for Assessment and Readiness for College and Careers testing, and the Teacher Excellence Support System partnered with Bloomboard. These mandates were changing the curriculum standards, the testing of the new standards, the instructional strategies to teach the new standards, and how teachers were evaluated, all in a relatively short period. The educational roles of teachers in Arkansas have been influenced by mandates passed down by the federal government and the Arkansas Department of Education. All of the new mandated requirements were meant to benefit teachers, students, and the Arkansas education

system, but to many, these initiatives were viewed as isolated parts that did not form one united whole because of the timing and magnitude of their implementations. When teachers lose sight of the bigger picture and how these components fit to create the picture, Unity of Purpose becomes lost, and teachers begin focusing on the smaller parts of the puzzle. Thus, when teachers perceive that a school has a low degree of Unity of Purpose, how does that affect the environment in which instruction takes place? Further, how does a perceived low degree of Unity of Purpose affect student performance?

Collegial Support

Aligned with Unity of Purpose is Collegial Support. Collegial support occurs when teachers work together respectfully and responsibly. Collegial support serves as a positive influence on school culture and student achievement. When teacher collegiality is present in a school, stakeholders view one another with mutual respect, understanding, and shared responsibility of meeting the needs of students by creating a positive school culture (Blackmore, Bigum, Hodgens, & Laskey, 1996). Having a positive school culture is a viable characteristic of any successful school. Positive school culture has a significant influence on the academic and social success of the students within schools (Squires & Kranyik, 1996). Collegial support prompts teachers to develop a culture of focusing on what is right in the school and exploring ways to collectively address the weaknesses that hinder effective teaching and student learning. Collegial support, therefore, is a shared commitment to take some of the responsibility in helping other teachers be the best instructional leaders that they can be in their classrooms. As a result of this Collegial Support, students will benefit educationally.

Learning Partnership

A learning partnership spans more than just the working relationships between teachers or teachers and administrators. A learning partnership involves school personnel, parents, students, and the larger school community working together for the common good of the students (Valentine, 2006). All stakeholders aim to have student academic success in the most conducive learning atmosphere. Adelman and Taylor (2007) stated that schools are located in communities but are often islands with no bridges to the mainland. They also said that families live in neighborhoods, often with little connection to each other or to the schools their children attend. However, all of these entities affect each other, positively or negatively. Schools, homes, and communities must collaborate with each other if they are to minimize complications and maximize results because of the shared goals that correspond to education and socialization of the young. In addition, an effective school fosters a positive learning environment for both teachers and students (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Adelman and Taylor (2007) noted that promoting well-being and resilience by empowering families, communities, and schools requires the concerted effort of all stakeholders. Schools are more effective and caring places when they represent a positive part of the community. They contended that this shared effort often results in enhanced academic performance, fewer discipline problems, higher staff morale, and improved use of resources. Schools with a learning partnership as its school culture sustain the image of a professional community where leadership is strong but not rigid (Deal & Peterson, 1990b). In this environment, teachers pursue a clear, shared purpose; engage in collaborative activity; and accept a collective responsibility for student learning

(Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). These schools also have a clear mission, and teachers value collaboration among their peers because they feel safe and secure asking for help. These high expectations are then carried out through instructional practice and expectations for student achievement.

Effects of Poverty

Researchers speak to the benefits of positive teacher morale, through positive school culture, on student performance. However, to what degree does poverty affect the six components of school culture: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose, or Learning Partnerships? In most school settings, the poverty level is defined by the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches. How do schools with a majority of students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches differ from schools with less than 55% of students eligible for a free or reduced-cost lunch? Some question whether poverty guides school culture or if school culture should direct the effects of poverty. On the one hand, some principals and teachers in high-poverty schools are less likely to agree with the low poverty school principals and teachers that they should be held accountable for everything that happens to students in their schools (Metropolitan Life Insurance & Harris Interactive, 2013). On the other hand, Sagar (2000) stated that school culture is more powerful than student background and can positively influence students. Thus, school characteristics such as the six components of school culture are better predictors of student performance than the poverty level. Thus, Sagar believed that having a high rate of poverty was not an excuse to expect less from teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, expectations are what help students and teachers strive to get to the next

level. The culture of the school should provide high expectations for students, regardless of the poverty level of the school environment.

The current study was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the teachers' culture of one school compared to another school with school-wide poverty level as the factor. Teachers' perspectives, relative to their school cultures, were measured based on the six components of school culture created by Valentine and Gruenaret (2006).

Hypotheses

The initial review of the literature suggested that positive teacher perceptions of Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships enhanced teacher productivity, which translated into a more conducive learning environment. Therefore, the researcher generated the following null and directional hypotheses:

1. H_{O1}: No significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collaborative Leadership measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A1}: Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collaborative Leadership.
2. H_{O2}: No significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Teacher Collaboration measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools.

H_{A2}: Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration.

3. H_{O3}: No significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Professional Development measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools.

   H_{A3}: Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Professional Development.

4. H_{O4}: No significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Unity of Purpose measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools.

   H_{A4}: Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Unity of Purpose.

5. H_{O5}: No significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collegial Support measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools.

   H_{A5}: Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collegial Support.

6. H_{O6}: No significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low

poverty on their perceptions of Learning Partnerships measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in sox rural Arkansas high schools.

H_{A6}: Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Learning Partnerships.

Description of Terms

Achieving. Schools in Arkansas that are given the achieving rating have met sufficient improvement on test scores to meet annual targets approved by the U.S. Department of Education (Friedman, 2014).

Collaborative. A collaborative involves establishing an infrastructure for working together to develop and enhance interventions and systems in arenas where the participants' agendas overlap (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Common Core State Standards. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2013) defined the Common Core State Standards as an outline of what students should know and be able to do in reading and mathematics from kindergarten through 12th grade. The standards align with the knowledge and skills needed to enter college or the workforce successfully, are benchmarked to the standards of the world's top-performing countries, and mark the first time that states share a common set of expectations for the nation's students.

Needs Improvement. Schools in Arkansas that are given the needs improvement rating do not meet their annual targets (Friedman, 2014).

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers is a consortium of 17 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands working together to

develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and mathematics (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, 2014). These new K-12 assessments build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students' progress toward this goal from third grade up and provide teachers with timely information to inform and provide student support. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessments was ready for states to administer during the 2014-2015 school year.

School-Wide Poverty Level. School-wide poverty level is the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-cost lunches. For this study, schools determined to have low school-wide poverty were those where 55% or fewer students receive free or reduced-cost lunches, and schools determined to have higher school-wide poverty were those where more than 55% of students receive free or reduced-cost lunches.

Socioeconomic Status. Socioeconomic status can be defined broadly as one's access to financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources. Traditionally, a student's socioeconomic status has included parental educational attainment, parental occupational status, and household or family income, with appropriate adjustment for household or family composition (Cowan & Hauser, 2012). For this study, socioeconomic status has been determined by eligibility for free or reduced-cost school lunches.

Teacher Excellence Support System. The Teacher Excellence and Support System is a statewide teacher evaluation system that provides support, collaboration, feedback, and targeted Professional Development opportunities aimed at ensuring

effective teaching and improving student learning (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012).

Significance

Research Gaps

This study was similar to the study conducted by Valentine (2006) at the University of Missouri. Valentine's study was conducted with Indiana schools, and this study was conducted with the cooperation of Arkansas schools. However, because there are different mandates set forth by each state's department of education, more research is needed to address the effects of socioeconomic influences on different aspects of school culture. At the local district level, expectations for teachers are determined by their school assignments. Therefore, the broader the data set from these different venues, the more effectively researchers will be able to identify what affects school culture and leads to improved healthy teacher development and better student outcomes.

Possible Implications for Practice

The results of this study should provide a better understanding of whether or not the level of school-wide poverty impacts the teacher's perception of school culture compared to the norm perception of school culture on the poverty level of the school itself. Once the above is better understood, administrators can take specific actions to influence school culture positively. Because of teachers' important roles in the fostering of a school culture, results of this study should focus on addressing teachers' needs to help students succeed in school.

Interested parties that need to know about this research include the teachers and administrators at the schools where the survey was conducted, as well as the community

and all stakeholders that view the schools as important centerpieces in their respective communities. The results of this study could also help build the teacher culture of a community so that the teachers feel supported and appreciated. Having a collaborative culture in the school should give the teachers a sense of importance and add value to their teaching credentials. Teachers must feel confident to help students succeed.

Process to Accomplish

Design

A causal-comparative strategy was used in this study. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) noted that causal-comparative strategies are appropriate when the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variable. The independent variable of all six hypotheses was the level of school-wide poverty of the school settings of the participating teachers; thus, the variable constituted a preexisting condition. The location of the schools, a rural environment, was held constant for all the participating schools. The dependent variables for the six hypotheses were Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose, and learning partnership, respectively.

Sample

This study used teachers from three rural 2A high schools (two moderately low-level and one moderately high-level poverty), two rural 5A high schools (one moderately low-level and one moderately high-level poverty) and one rural 3A high school (moderately high-level poverty). Schools were chosen based on their poverty level in 2013, and all six schools operated with a Grades 9-12 configuration. For this study, schools determined to have a moderately low school-wide poverty are those where 55%

or fewer students receive free or reduced-cost lunches, and schools determined to have moderately higher school-wide poverty are those where more than 55% of students receive free or reduced-cost lunches.

School A, a 2A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 361 students, made up of 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan, 0.3% Asian, 0.6% Black/African American, 2.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 96.4% White. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 50% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 7% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School A received a rating of Achieving for literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement for mathematics. In addition, School A was rated as Needs Improvement in the graduation rate set by the state. The overall school status of School A was Needs Improvement.

School B, a 2A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 285 students, made up of 1.1% American Indian/Alaskan, 0.7% Black/African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, and 92.3% White. Of the student body, 5% was considered limited in English proficiency, 65% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 9% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School B received a rating of Achieving for literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement for mathematics. In addition, School B was rated as Achieving in the graduation rate set by the state. The overall school status for school B was Needs Improvement.

School C, a 5A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 915 students, made up 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan, 1.1% Asian, 2.4% Black/African American, 3.2% Hispanic/Latino, 89.5% White, and 3.5% reporting two or more races. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 40% received

free or reduced-cost lunches, and 14% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School C received a rating of Needs Improvement in literacy and a rating of Achieving in mathematics. In addition, School C was rated as Achieving in the graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School C was Needs Improvement.

School D, a 5A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 810 made up of 5% American Indian/Alaskan, 1.1% Asian, 61% Black/African American, 0.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 31.1% White, and 3.1% reported two or more races. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 61% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 12% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School D received a rating of Needs Improvement in literacy and a rating of Achieving in mathematics. In addition, School D was rated as Achieving in graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School D was Needs Improvement.

School E, a 2A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 371 made up of 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan, 0.8% Black/African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 94.9% White, and 0% reported two or more races. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 60.25% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 7% were eligible to receive special education services. School E received a rating of Achieving in literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement in mathematics. In addition, School E was rated as Needs Improvement in graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School E was Needs Improvement.

School F, a 3A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 396 made up of 2.5% American Indian/Alaskan, 1.3% Asian, 0.8% Black/African American, 0.3%

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.8% Hispanic/Latina, 90.4% White, and 2% reported two or more races. Of this student body, no data were available on limited English proficiency, 58% received free or reduced-cost lunch items, and 13% were eligible to receive special education services. School F received a rating of Needs Improvement in literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement in mathematics. In addition, School E was rated Needs Improvement in graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School F was Needs Improvement.

Instrumentation

The researcher constructed this study around the six cultural components identified by Valentine and Gruenert (2006) that served as the dependent variables. Valentine and Gruenert surveyed teachers in 23 elementary schools in three districts in Missouri in the spring of 2007. The survey was validated and included the six factors: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships. Respondents reported their perceptions on a 5-point Likert scale with a range of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

The survey measures perception of shared values and beliefs, the designs of behavior, and the interactions among teachers in the school. Each factor measures a unique aspect of the school's collaborative culture (Valentine, 2006). The factor definitions are given, and the additional sentences provide more detail about the concepts associated with each factor. The authors reported that the Cronbach's Alpha Factor Reliability Coefficients on the cognitive items of the six components were as follows: Collaborative Leadership (.910), Teacher Collaboration (.834), Professional

Development (.867), Unity of Purpose (.821), Collegial Support (.796), and Learning Partnership (.658).

Data Analysis

In the present study, the survey was offered to each teacher in Grades 9-12 at the participating schools, and teachers voluntarily completed the school culture survey at the six schools. The data from the surveys were collected, and the results were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. Six one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used. The independent variable of all of the hypotheses was the level of school-wide poverty of the schools with two levels, lower and higher school-wide poverty. The dependent variables for the six hypotheses were Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose, and learning partnership, respectively. To test the null hypotheses, the researcher used a two-tailed test with a .05 level of significance.

This study sought to determine whether the level of school-wide poverty within secondary schools in rural Arkansas affects teacher perceptions of school culture. Previously, a similar process was conducted in elementary and middle schools across all types of communities in the state of Indiana (Valentine, 2006). Findings may provide insight for those working within rural secondary schools, specifically rural high schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

As in society-at-large, culture also shapes the traditions, values, and norms, and it formulates an environment where teaching and learning are optimal and where positive relationships allow for the sharing of new ideas and new ways of thinking (Villalta Paucar & Saavedra Guajardo, 2012). Ultimately, positive school cultures lend to students' demonstration of high levels of academic achievement in all subject areas and at every grade level (Villalta Paucar & Saavedra Guajardo, 2012). Researchers assert that variables such as socioeconomics, collaboration among teachers, Professional Development, unity, Collegial Support, and teachers' perceptions help to shape each school's culture (Morton, 2016). The purpose of this study is to determine if and to what degree school-wide poverty has an effect on the variables above.

History of School Culture

School culture is a concept that has been documented by researchers since the 1950s. Loertscher and Koechlin (2015) wrote that the concept of culture was first studied in the context of organizations in general, during the 1950s and 1960s, when Hoy and Tarter (1997) investigated the differences in work environments. However, culture, as it relates to school environments, evolved out of the research by Halpin and Croft (1963), who are deemed as the pioneers of school culture research. Halpin and Croft surveyed teachers using the Organizational Culture Description Questionnaire. The purpose of the

survey was to measure the cognitive, affective, and social domains of high schools located in the United Kingdom and to determine the influence of leaders' behaviors on school culture. After the study had been put forth between 1963 and 1967, the Organizational Culture Description Questionnaire was used as the survey instrument in over 100 research studies relating school culture (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015). Then, during the 1960s and 1970s, studies by Mischel (1961), Coleman et al. (1966), Sugarman (1967), Barker and Gump (1965), and Brookover and Erickson (1969) focused on school culture. Within these studies, the phrase *school culture* was also interchanged with *school climate*. Although school culture and school climate were often described as overlapping concepts in the studies, researchers argued that there is a difference between the two. For example, climate is often referred to as a behavior, and culture involves the values and norms of the school (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). Since the 1970s, researchers have consistently viewed school culture as a factor that impacts student performance.

During the 1970s and 1980s, various research studies supported the assertion that school culture was a variable, which strongly impacted educational environments. Then, in the late 1990s, as the racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic demographics of K-12 students began to become more diversified and as educational reform began to be the topic of concern. Fullan (1996) diverted focus away from the variables, which impacted school culture and instead emphasized the process of change and how it impacted school culture (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015). Fullan (1996) specifically focused on the culture of change by examining leadership, teaching, and educational reform. He also wrote about the norms, values, and beliefs of students, parents, teachers, and administrators, and how

they should collaborate to solve problems during the culture of change. Likewise, Kotter (1996) did not focus on variables that impacted culture but on stakeholder's reactions to the change caused by variables. Currently, research on school culture most often focuses on how variables such as socioeconomics, leadership, teachers' perceptions, Professional Development, and decision-making impact school culture.

Definition of School Culture

While school culture has been shown to impact various aspects of the teaching and learning process, there is no standard definition of the concept. Several researchers have provided definitions for culture in general and school culture, as well. For example, Deal and Peterson (1990a) defined culture as "the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time" (p. 7). Bates (1992) described culture as the "framework that connects beliefs, values, and knowledge with action" (p. 98). Hargreaves (2011) defined school culture as "the beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers who have had to deal with similar demands and constraints over many years" (p. 217). Weaver (1996) defined school culture as the way faculty and staff interact with students, parents, or other outsiders. Weaver goes on to state that school culture is indicated by the feel or climate of the culture. Bruner (1996) added another definition of culture as being "all about a mode of coping with human problems: with human transactions of all sorts, depicted in symbols" (p. 99). Hoy and Miskel (2005) defined "organizational cultures as symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs" and as a "deeper level of basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that become shared and taken for granted as the

organization continues to be successful" (p. 165). Other researchers wrote about the social implications of culture.

Culture encompasses unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that impact the way people act, dress, talk, seek help, and work with others. Lumby and Foskett (2011) defined the concept of school culture as a tool to assist with the process of making sense of people by providing a mechanism for categorizing, simplifying, and describing the human state. Collectively, the definitions that were put forth by various researchers indicate that school culture encompasses beliefs, habits, and behaviors that impact the climate of an organization over a period of time. However, for the purpose of this study, school culture was defined as the collective school environment informed by the individual experiences, perceptions, and expectations of each member of the internal school community (Pritchett, 2012). There are several characteristics associated with school culture.

Researchers have identified several elements of school culture either into a positive or negative culture. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) noted that there are well-defined characteristics of school culture. For example, negative school culture is mostly achievement-oriented, very formal, and unpleasant. Moreover, interpersonal relationships are neglected (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Researchers warn that when teachers work in negative school environments or cultures, communication is difficult, and interpersonal collaboration is hard to establish (Ashley, 2016; Fletcher, 2015). In such environments, it is also difficult to exchange information and to offer or receive help (Cohen, 2013; Thapa et al., 2013). Teachers spend very little time discussing information. They often remain in the classroom and focus primarily on relationships with their students (Cohen, 2013).

Instead of fostering the needs of their colleagues, in negative environments, teachers attend to satisfying the needs of their students and their parents to survive from day to day (Bipath & Moyo, 2016). They practice routine work, which becomes boring and monotonous and eventually no longer presents a professional challenge. As a result, learning is diminished, and the teachers only learn from their mistakes (Cohen, 2013). Such factors are exacerbated when school-wide poverty is added to the equation (Thapa et al., 2013).

Positive school cultures reflect praise for diligence, high expectations, and bureaucratic discipline (Ashley, 2016; Hollins, 2015; O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015). In schools that exemplify a positive culture, the environment is competitive, and the attention is on subject matter that is aligned with state and national grade level curriculum standards (Ashley, 2016; Fletcher, 2015). Schools that exemplify positive cultures also promote feelings of belonging, mutual respect, morality, and care for others (Ashley, 2016; Cohen, 2013). Poverty is a factor which impacts school culture.

Impact of Poverty on School Culture

Poverty affects school culture but is a condition that is out of the control of building leaders. Moreover, poverty often has a negative effect on school achievement. School environments with higher percentages of students from impoverished backgrounds represent larger numbers of lower performing schools (McDonald, 2013). In addition, low performing schools face multiple problems such as higher percentages of discipline referrals and absenteeism, high teacher turnover rates, and lower scores on high stakes tests (Haig, 2014). In contrast, students from more affluent backgrounds tend to earn better scores on standardized achievement tests at every grade level and in every

subject area (Morgan, 2012; Petrilli & Wright, 2016). To understand the impact of poverty on school culture, socioeconomic structures should be examined.

First, socioeconomics is based upon classism, a theory which centers on a hierarchy of social, financial, and educational constructs. Typically, individuals in America are placed into one of three socioeconomic classes or levels: upper, middle, or lower (Lumpkin, 2016). Payne (2004) wrote about the rules that govern the three major socioeconomic classes that are represented in America's classrooms. Payne asserted that teachers become more effective when they understand the rules that govern their students who live in poverty. According to Payne, students who live in poverty:

- are often challenged with acquiring the fundamentals needed for survival, such as food, clothing, and shelter;
- tend to value interpersonal relationships more than material positions and are very protective of their relationships;
- judge individuals by their ability to entertain, and they value quantity over quality;
- feel that their destinies have been predetermined and as a result, the notion of having choices is unusual;
- having educational processes are abstract;
- view the world in local terms;
- are accustomed to higher noise levels and basic information;
- believe that what one does is overshadowed by what one says; and
- believe that displaying one’s emotions is a sign of weakness.

Additionally, students who live in poverty more often experience economic hardship, poor living conditions, inadequate health care, and limited resources. As a result of low resources, they often lack a variety of experiences and literacy skills that play a vital role in determining their school readiness and their ability to achieve (Lumpkin, 2016). Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds may lack access to resources and activities and are more likely to experience frequent disruptions in parenting, family conflicts, mental illness, and physical abuse (Olsten 2015; Payne 2004). The experiences of children who live in poverty often transfer into their educational experience, which must be addressed by those who teach them.

To foster a positive school culture within schools with larger percentages of students living in poverty, teachers should build respectful relationships with their students. They should also demonstrate high expectations, demand their best work, and demonstrate firm and genuine care and support (Morgan, 2012). They should build a positive rapport with students by talking respectfully to them and by addressing them individually. When teaching students from impoverished backgrounds, teachers should make curriculum content relevant and allow for frequent interaction (Lumpkin, 2016; McCarty, 2014; Olsten 2015; Payne 2004; Tienkien, 2012; Wallace, 2015). Researchers agree that such behaviors lead to positive relationships between teachers and their students.

Researchers have noted that poverty also influences students' language, resources, life experiences, and resiliency. Because many students living in poverty tend to use their cultural dialect, they may object to formal English (Duncan, Morris, & Rodrigues, 2011). Therefore, teachers should explain the differences between formal

grammar and dialect. Also, teachers must understand many students have limited resources, which may make it impossible for them to complete assignments requiring materials not provided by the school (Jensen, 2013; Morgan, 2012; Tienken, 2012). Because students living in poverty may have limited life experiences, teachers provide instruction so that students' learning moves from concrete to abstract (Curwen & Colón-Muñiz, 2013). Teachers should also model the factors of resiliency: (a) life skills, (b) self-control, (c) autonomy, (d) orientation toward a positive future, (e) adaptability/flexibility, (f) intrinsic motivation, and (g) self-efficacy (Morgan, 2012; Tienken, 2012). To accommodate this populace of learners, teachers who work with students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds often need guidance and support through Collaborative Leadership.

The Impact of Collaborative Leadership on School Culture

The literature suggests that Collaborative Leadership may be effective in improving teacher self-efficacy and effectiveness. The literature by Kramer and Crespy (2011) informed that Collaborative Leadership is a fairly new term. Traditionally, leadership has focused on a top-down or vertical approach aimed at leaders' influence on their followers. To the contrary, Collaborative Leadership focuses on horizontal relationships and how members of an organization at every level interact and influence behaviors and patterns for the good of the group (Kramer & Crespy, 2011). Kramer and Crespy (2011) defined Collaborative Leadership as an alternative to traditional leadership, which focuses on the interaction between members of an organization as a shared process in which leaders and participants engage in decision making. Carter (2012) added that the term Collaborative Leadership implies that numerous individuals

within a common setting work together to share information, methods, strategies, and experiences to reach organizational goals. Thus, how principals view their relationships and their roles as collaborative leaders impact school culture.

School administrators are ultimately responsible for developing the culture of school environments. For example, Nixon (2015) conducted a study to determine how school administrators could influence school culture regarding teacher satisfaction. Three questions guided the quantitative study:

- Did the student achievement at Clear Creek Middle School increase with a change in leadership over the last eight years?
- Was the shift in student achievement accompanied by a shift in school culture?
- Which domain(s) of transformational leadership (setting direction, developing the people, redefining the organization, and managing the instructional environment) had the greatest changes before and after the introduction of a transformational leader?

The study was conducted at a rural high-poverty middle school. Results from the study indicated that the culture of high expectations must be first expected by the principal who should, in turn, communicate those goals regularly to the students, faculty, and community. The expectation must also be communicated throughout every aspect of the school from custodians to bus drivers, teachers, and parents. Nixon (2015) wrote, "culture that is conducive to teaching yields the greatest benefit of removing excuses so the administrator can truly get perspective on who can and cannot teach" (p. 123). He also

noted that rural schools of poverty that lack highly visible principals would have poor cultures coupled with poor student performance.

Consequently, principals should have a positive attitude about school policies, procedures, and practices and should set high expectations for all stakeholders. Mees (2008) added that principals demonstrate Collaborative Leadership traits when they value teachers' thoughts, pursue input, involve staff in decision-making, and have faith in the professional judgment of the staff. Herndon (2012) also stated that as collaborative leaders, principals must trust the professional judgment of teachers as well as support risk-taking, back innovation, and share new ideas and practices. Another important responsibility of principals as collaborative leaders is to provide teachers and community members with opportunities to meet to discuss important topics such as how to improve student achievement and meet the needs of faculty and staff. According to Norris (1994), principals who meet the needs of their faculty and staff, socially and emotionally, help them grow professionally and help to mold the culture of the schools into a positive community of learners. This shifts the focus of decision making *from I to we*. Collaborative leadership is not based on the decisions of single individuals; they are based on team outcomes from dialogues between individuals who are engaged in mutually dependent activities.

Effective, collaborative principals share responsibilities with others and trust teachers and other school personnel to take leadership roles. Collaborative leaders also seek to continually engage stakeholders in change processes relating to issues of curriculum and instruction, evidence-based practices, and behavior management (Gialamas, Pelonis, & Medeiros, 2014). They understand why a collaborative culture is

important and actively support and model its development and maintenance (Cosner, 2014). They work to develop a culture of trust within the school so that personnel feel supported in taking risks as they move towards obtaining their goals (Glowacki-Dudka & Murray, 2015). In summary, school principals have an indirect impact on student achievement and are responsible for helping teachers improve their practices (Cosner, 2014). When principals consistently demonstrate Collaborative Leadership, their teachers also participate in collaboration at higher rates (Cosner, 2014; Glowacki-Dudka & Murray, 2015). Like principals, teachers should also seek to collaborate to improve pedagogy and student performance. All of these practices help to mold teachers' perceptions of school culture.

The Impact of Teacher Collaboration on School Culture

Collaboration among teachers is key to improving their knowledge, their effectiveness, and ultimately, their students' achievement. Consistent collaboration among teachers also stimulates new ideas and promotes coherence in curricula. Moreover, teacher collaboration through professional development, focus groups, and mentoring impedes isolation, prevents end-of-year burn-out, and brings veteran and novice teachers together to reinforce their self-efficacy (Forte & Flores, 2014). Over time, teachers who work closely together also take considerable satisfaction from professional relationships that withstand conflict and differences in viewpoints (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2015). Through collaboration, teachers are also better able to understand and support their colleagues' strengths and weaknesses and pool together their ideas and resources (Forte & Flores, 2014; Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015; Killion, 2015;

Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2015). Researchers offer several components to effective collaboration among teachers.

Effective teacher collaboration includes several components. One component of effective teacher collaboration is symbolic endorsements and rewards. Symbolic endorsements and rewards refer to principals' efforts to create special environments where teachers work together to make the school better for students (Miles, 2016). Principals must also have a detailed plan that spells out to teachers what collaboration means and how it looks. Other components of effective teacher collaboration are assignments and leadership. These factors are associated with the principals' ability to create teams that provide opportunities to demonstrate leadership capabilities (Foltos, 2015). Additionally, for teacher collaboration to take place, there must be time set aside for teachers to meet on a regular basis by both subject area and by grade level (Leu, Templeton, & Yoon, 2016; Miles, 2016). Professional development and training are also vital components of teacher collaboration as teachers must have periods set aside to meet pressing demands as well as to build their knowledge base and refine their teaching skills (Foltos, 2015; Miles, 2016). In addition, teachers must also have material support such as the availability of viable instructional and human resources that contribute to teachers' willingness to work together (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014). The literature researchers on teacher collaboration suggested that it involves more than simply working together. A collaborative relationship is more than the enhancement of cooperation and coordination (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014; Foltos, 2015). Collaboration affects how the school functions.

Put simply, a culture of collaboration among teachers recognizes that teachers are the most influential players within the classrooms and that they must develop meaningful, functioning relationships through thought, planning, and implementation. Teacher collaboration should be constructed with vision, policy, leadership, infrastructure, and capacity building, which requires establishing clear and concise goals. Teacher collaboration allows teachers to develop meaningful working relationships that enable them to overcome individual agendas and work together with a common vision (Woods, 2014). Such opportunities are often granted through Professional Development.

The Impact of Teachers' Professional Development on School Culture

Teachers should be lifelong learners. Although teacher collaboration is a necessity for developing and maintaining a positive learning culture, teachers must also remain abreast of topics that impact their ability to improve learning. Professional development for teachers is recognized as a vital component of policies to enhance teaching and learning (Bostic & Matney, 2013). Professional development is a job-embedded, career-long process, with a learner-focused perspective (Clark, 2016). Quality professional development can change teachers' practices and positively affect teachers' perceptions (Consuegra & Engels, 2016). A goal of professional development is to create learning communities where participants engage in meaningful activities and collaborate with their peers to co-construct knowledge about teaching and learning (Denson, 2016). The positive outcomes of well-functioning learning communities hinge on professional learning opportunities.

High-quality professional development can improve teachers' perceptions and teacher retention. High-quality professional development also focuses on subject area

content and how students learn it. It should be intensive, involve prolonged training sessions, and include follow-up (Orlando, 2016). It should be aligned with state and national standards and should allow for collaboration among peers, administrators, and experts (Snyder, 2016). Teachers' participation in high-quality professional development should also positively influence school culture.

A growing body of research indicates that professional development affects school culture in two major ways. First, professional development enhances teacher knowledge and skills. Second, better knowledge and skills improve classroom teaching (Clark, 2016). Three core features of professional development activities have shown significant, positive effects on teachers' self-reported increases in knowledge and skills resulting in changes in the classroom: (a) focus on content knowledge; (b) opportunities for active learning; and (c) coherence with other learning activities (Chester, 2012). Teachers want high-quality professional learning that is meaningfully connected to their daily work and to the students they serve. Professional development should be informed by teacher self-assessments and evaluations (Denson, 2016). Helping teachers make a fundamental shift in practice requires very powerful approaches to professional development. The fourth component of school culture was Unity of Purpose, and it is described as the level teachers worked to attain the schools agreed upon mission (Gruenert, 1998). Teachers who are provided the school's mission should know and comprehend it, support it, and perform the jobs by displaying a high degree of Unity of Purpose. When teachers have the same goal for student success, an optimal outcome is attainable.

Teacher efficacy is strengthened through planning and working with other teachers. In so doing, student engagement can be increased. Confidence in what one does increases when educators truly care and teacher efficacy influences teacher beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1988). Teachers have to learn to work together and get along so that they can perform as a team because school is not for the teachers but is for the students. Collegial support among teachers is one of the key components of a team relationship toward building efficacy to help teachers mold students into productive citizens of the community.

The Impact of Collegial Support on School Culture

Collegial support refers to the description of how teachers work together and whether or not they are supportive of each other. Sergiovanni (1992) stated, "There is widespread agreement that collegiality among teachers is an important ingredient of promoting better working conditions, improving teaching practice, and getting better results" (p. 18). According to Valentine and Gruenert (2006), when there is Collegial Support, the teachers trust each other, value each other's ideas, and assist each other as they work to accomplish the tasks of the school organization. School cultures that want to change and move from toxic to healthy cultures must first begin with people.

Individual perception of a collective experience forms by social interaction. Bonding happens among individuals based on convictions, standards, perceptions, and expectations (Cavanagh & Dellar, 2001). Sergiovanni (1992) stated that collegiality has benefits beyond cultivating the workplace and contributing to learning. Even though collegiality is understood as a professional virtue, collegiality is another powerful substitute for leadership. He also stated that as more natural connections among people

are established, the more teachers become self-managed and self-led so that direct leadership from the principal becomes less needed.

Collegiality and school culture are connected. The attitudes that teachers and principals have about school have a tremendous effect on the students' everyday experiences (Littky & Grabelle, 2011). With this connectedness, school staff will be guides and facilitators of student learning inside the school through Learning Partnerships within the community of the school and outside the school so that the students will academically strive to think for themselves and learn how to think.

The Impact on Learning Partnership on School Culture

The presence of a learning partnership, found in schools with a strong relationship between school and home based on helping students succeed, was found to influence student culture. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) stated that Learning Partnerships form when teachers, parents, and students work together for the common good of the student. Parents and teachers share common expectations and frequently communicate about student performance. Similarly, parents trust teachers, and students generally accept responsibility for their schooling (Valentine & Gruenert, 2006). Mees (2008) stated that the faculty must be able to see the parents as partners for student success. The capacity to work with parents for the benefit of the student must be built within the faculty by the principal. In Mees' study, the poverty level and the learning partnership created between school and home to benefit the student were significant indicators of student culture. According to Larson and Ovando (2001), educators must fight the knee-jerk reaction they may have to interact with people who are different from themselves, including those that who are of lower socioeconomic status. The findings from Mees' (2008) study about

Learning Partnerships between school and home provide evidence that educators must overcome their biases about parents from poverty and actively work to improve relationships between school and home. Teacher biases must be addressed and changed. Otherwise, teachers will not put forth the energy and time on what they feel will be an unproductive endeavor.

Relationships between teachers, students, and parents are essential for the attainment of positive educational outcomes. Parental involvement in schools also promotes increased achievement, less aggression, increased attendance, and increased graduation rates (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). Therefore, teachers, parents, students, and principals must develop a capacity for high levels to work together for the common good of the student with socioeconomic status not being a factor (Mees, 2008). These forms of effective teacher behaviors seldom evolve unless the principal establishes a culture for their development. Mees (2008) went on to say that principals have the responsibility to establish and maintain a collaborative, problem-solving, intellectual culture that supports teachers as they work to build these critical relationships. A common understanding is the first step towards building and repairing home/school relationships among the community begins with empathy for students' families. Relationships are the foundation of an exceptional school, and leaders cannot build relationships without cultivating a culture of trust and respect.

Several researchers have conducted studies using Valentine's survey instrument. Potrowsky (2004) conducted a study that examined the effect of leadership on school culture. The 35-item Likert-scale survey defined six variables: Collaborative Leadership (11 items), Teacher Collaboration (6 items), Professional Development (5 items), Unity

of Purpose (5 items), Collegial Support (4 items), and Learning Partnerships (4 items). Of the 111 possible respondents, 80 returned surveys for a response rate of 72%. However, only 68 of the 80 surveys included answers to all survey questions. A Post hoc test was used to determine the relationship between school culture and teacher retention. A positive relationship was found to exist between schools with a Culture of Learning Partnerships and teacher retention.

In another study that focused on school culture and teacher evaluation, Mack (2013) determined the relationship between teacher evaluation and school culture in a suburban school in the northeastern part of the United States. The research questions focused on the relationship between the purposes and procedures of evaluation and factors of collaborative school culture as determined by Gruenert's instrument, used to measure school culture. Data from a self-report survey given to elementary school teachers were used (N = 75). The results indicated that the teachers perceived a significant relationship between teacher evaluation and an aspect of Unity of Purpose. Additionally, results revealed that teachers perceived a relationship between teacher evaluation being focused on teachers' engagement in dialogue and about their professional practice. Further, the findings suggested that the presence of a collaborative culture correlated with greater opportunities for educators to use the evaluation process as a Professional Development opportunity.

Poverty and Education

Social class and socioeconomics create the context through which an individual experiences the world. An individual's socioeconomic status affects how readily a person interprets situations and how much control an individual perceives as having over life

events and outcomes. Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, and Keltner (2012) explained that a person's socioeconomic status influences the way he or she relates to the environment. Lesaux and Siegel (2003) described students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds as those students who are mostly subjected to economic hardship, poor living conditions, inadequate health care, and limited resources. They stated that K-12 students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds often lack a variety of experiences and literacy skills that play a vital role in determining their school readiness and their ability to achieve. On the one hand, students from more affluent backgrounds may be more familiar with curriculum content because of their participation in experiences and access to various resources that wealth has allotted them. On the other hand, students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds may be less familiar with curriculum content because of their lack of access to resources and activities such as travel, computers, and Internet access. Additionally, students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds experience more frequent disruptions in parenting, more frequent family conflicts, and more frequent mental and physical abuse. Differences in the socioeconomic status of teachers, who are considered middle-class, and the socioeconomic status of students who live in poverty can affect communication, teacher effectiveness, and student learning.

The literature stated that to become more effective among K-12 students who are considered poor, teachers should understand the psyche of individuals living in poverty. To better accommodate students who live in poverty, Payne (2004) offered nine strategies. Understanding these strategies might lead to a shift in the cultures of schools where a large number of students come from low-income homes. According to Payne,

there are specific strategies that have been found to increase the academic success of students who are considered poor. Payne asserted that teachers should:

- build respectful relationships with their students, insist on their best work, and demonstrate genuine care and support;
- become aware of positive and negative signs of non-verbal communication and then use positive non-verbal communication to respond to their students;
- build a positive rapport with students by talking to students respectfully, noticing and addressing students individually, and providing support when needed;
- make learning relevant for students by providing new information in a supportive context; and
- introduce new content through paired assignments or cooperative group work.

Accommodating high-poverty students and being aware of what needs to be done to help them be successful is key to a positive culture in the classroom that stems to a positive culture in the school.

Payne (2004) further suggested some strategies for teachers that explains that many students living in poverty speak most often using their cultural dialect. These students may object to the formal register or Standard English and refer to it as talking White. Therefore, Payne encouraged teachers to explain to their students the differences between the formal register and cultural dialect and when the use of each is most appropriate. Furthermore, teachers should:

- provide students with continuous opportunities to translate phrases from the casual to the formal register;

- monitor students' progress constantly and plan and execute instructional interventions;
- provide additional instructional time involving alternative instructional and learning methods;
- provide instruction so that students' learning moves from concrete to abstract, as concrete examples help students build on tangible information and move students toward mental acquisition;
- help students understand how to formulate the right questions;
- create a welcoming atmosphere for parents; and
- make home visits, which can provide insight into their students' living environments and conditions.

Standard English is not something that is practiced if it is not known in the household. Reinforcement, repetitiveness, and emphasis are keys to the progress of students using Standard English. Students do not understand the importance of using Standard English because the notion of talking White is not considered talking correctly. Students do not know how to act outside of the home because the culture of home life is instilled in their brains since birth. As students and their families understand the importance of ways to behave and speak formally, the ease and comfort of this culture change shifts.

Similarly, literature offered suggests that special attention must be given to improving the educational experience of K-12 students who live in poverty. However, the focus of her research was on resiliency. Some students are faced with challenges brought about by poverty (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Donlan, Prescott, and Zaff (2016) wrote that students who are raised in poverty are much less likely to have these crucial needs

met compared to their more affluent counterparts, and as a result, are subject to some grave consequences. Students who live in poverty come to school often behind their more affluent peers regarding literacy and language development. Poverty also often places constraints on families' ability to provide other material resources for their children as well (Oyserman, 2013). For example, they may have limited access to high-quality daycare, limited access to before- or after-school care, and limited physical space in their homes to create private or quiet environments conducive to studying. Still, to be successful in school, they must demonstrate resiliency against factors caused by poverty such as emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive deficiencies, and health and safety issues.

Students may be successful despite severe financial hardships they may face. However, teachers should consider the social conditions and hardships that students who live in poverty face on a daily basis. Teachers should also model the factors of resiliency: (a) life skills, (b) self-control, (c) autonomy, (d) orientation toward a positive future, (e) adaptability/flexibility, (f) intrinsic motivation, and (g) self-efficacy (McKinney et al., n.d.) However, individuals considered poor often have different frames of reference from those individuals considered middle-class.

The literature indicated that individuals from upper-socioeconomic backgrounds, or wealthy individuals, are driven by money, politics, and social connections. Wealthy individuals are also often influenced by perceptions, particularly by the perceptions of others. For example, the presentation of food is more important than the quantity of food. Payne (2004) also reported that rather than being inclusive, wealthy individuals tend to practice social exclusion. The worth of an individual is related to the amount of

money acquired. Love and acceptance are also related to one's social standing. Because traditions and history are highly valued, formal education is a tool deemed necessary for making and maintaining connections. When communicating, the formal register is most often used, and the world is viewed in international terms. Educational researchers contend that K-12 teachers must become more informed about the cultural norms of students from various racial and socioeconomic groups (Lesaux, Rupp, & Siegel, 2007). Understanding the differences between various socioeconomic backgrounds may be essential to developing healthy teachers' perceptions and therefore increasing the effectiveness of teachers within the school culture.

High-Poverty Schools

High-poverty schools have been paired with low-academic achievement throughout the history of keeping data for schools. A strong predictor of student achievement has consistently been the socioeconomic status of students (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). "Many studies show that children in poverty often achieve less in school than children in middle-class families" (Moe, 2001, p. 46). As stated previously, socioeconomic status has been determined by eligibility for free or reduced-cost school lunches. Moe (2001) stated that low-socioeconomic status students had remained academically the same despite the money that has been given to these schools. The gap has not been reduced despite the amount of money spent on these efforts. In contrast, leadership, collaborative practices, and positive teacher beliefs have been what positively influenced high-poverty schools. According to Guisto (2011), academic success in high-poverty schools have these common variables already in place that nurture positive outcomes for the high-poverty students. No reform initiative made these schools

efficacious, but these have common variables in place that nurture high student performance. Despite what has been stated by many, a number of high-poverty schools have had success in attaining high academic achievement. The significant literature on high-poverty schools producing high student achievement affirms long-standing interest in school-wide systems and structures in place that has enabled this phenomenon to emerge. The results of this type of research gave hope to high poverty schools with expectations of failing to think positively and know there is hope.

There are organizational structures and systems that promote high academic achievement in high-poverty schools. Giusto (2011) explained that once effective high-poverty schools were identified, despite their socioeconomic status or family background, common characteristics that influenced high student achievement were inferred. The improvement of policies, philosophies, and practices is what helped the students excel. Three common factors such as teacher-level factors, school-level factors, and student-level factors are what Marzano's (2003) research emphasized that effective schools revolve around. Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, and Russ (2004) stated that the following factors had been found to improve the quality of school-wide poverty neighborhoods: (a) the focus on improving teaching and learning, (b) the creation of an information-rich environment, (c) the building of a learning community, (d) the continuous Professional Development, (e) the involvement of parents, and (f) the increased funding and resources. In summary, several protocols have to be in place such as the role of leadership, professional learning, organizational support, and teacher beliefs.

Although many schools throughout America are high-poverty schools, their students have managed to be successful academically. High-poverty schools with large

percentages of minority students are often referred to as 90/90/90 schools (Reeves, 2003). These schools are located in the inner-city, suburban areas, and rural areas. Reeves (2003) found characteristics of 90/90/90 schools that have high-student achievement including (a) a focus on academic achievement, (b) clear curriculum choices, (d) frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement, (d) an emphasis on nonfiction writing, and (e) collaborative scoring of student work. It is important to focus on the characteristics of 90/90/90 schools because most of the students in these schools are academically successful. Moreover, teachers in 90/90/90 schools dedicate time for collaboration, which focuses on examinations of students' work.

Much of the literature that focuses on 90/90/90 schools indicated that such institutions face unique challenges. Reeves (2003) called these schools 90/90/90 because 90% of the students were of an ethnic minority, 90% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 90% of students achieved at high levels of proficiency. With this research, Reeves discovered that these schools performed at high levels and found that students could be successful regardless of their socioeconomic background. Similar academic attributes focused on clear curricular choices, frequent student assessment progress, and external scoring common characteristics, which were found in all 90/90/90 schools (Reeves, 2003). The school-level factors, teacher-level factors, and student-level factors that Marzano (2003) introduced were also apparent in the 90/90/90 schools. Even though there is ample research on effective practices (Marzano, 2003; Reeves, 2003), there is a limited amount of research on how these practices are implemented with fidelity and sustained over long periods, especially for high schools. Although the school culture is not dependent on the socioeconomic level of the school and should not be a

determinant of whether that school will be successful or not, teachers' perceptions are the teachers' primary focus.

Historically, students who live in poverty (as indicated by their eligibility for free and reduced-priced meals) have not performed at the same academic achievement levels as their peers from high-income backgrounds. On most measures of academic achievement such as standardized test scores, grades, high school completion rates, and college enrollment and completion rates, most students from impoverished backgrounds have not performed as well as their classmates. Among students born in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, the reading achievement gap between those from high-income backgrounds and those from low-income backgrounds was about 0.9 of a standard deviation (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). However, among students born some 20 to 25 years later, the achievement gap for standardized tests was a 1.25 standard deviation, which is 40% larger compared to the gap several decades earlier (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). The college-completion rate among students from high-income families has grown sharply in the last few decades, whereas the completion rate for students from low-income families has barely moved (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Moreover, students from high incomes make up an increasing share of the enrollment at the most selective colleges and universities (Reardon, Baker, & Klasik, 2012), even when compared with low-income students with similar test scores and academic records (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). The level of family income may affect school performance, but it is unclear how the level of school poverty affects school culture.

School culture is a valuable component of any school district. The perception of how a school district values collaboration among teachers, Professional Development,

unity, Collegial Support, and principals' roles in teachers' perceptions are key factors that should be considered in all aspects of the changing educational world. There is no way to teach all of the students the same way and get the same results. Beliefs, habits, and behaviors that influence the culture of the school also impact the effectiveness of the school. Teachers have to feel valued and be trained in all areas of education ranging from subject matter to dealing with parents/guardians of students. Having the confidence to be an effective teacher comes from the support of educational colleagues, principals, and communities.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Culture determines the level of empowerment members of an organization have. Culture also contributes to communication and trust in relationships (Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016). Having a supportive culture in schools fosters positive outcomes for students, parents, teachers, and administrators (Romay, Magee, & Slater, 2016). School culture refers to the deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of the school's history, which are understood by members of the school community (Bower & Parsons, 2016). Culture is created within a school over time and is constantly shaped through interactions with others (Van Gasse, Vanhoof, & Van Petegem, 2016). Therefore, though trends in education frequently arise, the topic of culture has remained a primary research focus with regards to positive change.

This researcher attempted to focus on the effects of poverty on the culture in six Arkansas schools. The independent variable of this study was the pre-existing condition level of school-wide poverty within the school settings. The dependent variables were teachers' perceptions of the six components of school culture: (1) Collaborative Leadership, (2) Teacher Collaboration, (3) Professional Development, (4) Collegial Support, (5) Unity of Purpose, and (6) learning partnership measured by the School Culture Survey for Grade 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. Therefore, the researcher generated the following hypotheses.

1. H_{O1}. There will be no significant difference in teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty in perceptions of Collaborative Leadership.

   H_{A1}. Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collaborative Leadership.

2. H_{O2}. There will be no significant difference in teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty in perceptions of Teacher Collaboration.

   H_{A2}. Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration.

3. H_{O3}. There will be no significant difference in teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty in perceptions of Professional Development.

   H_{A3}. Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Professional Development.

4. H_{O4}. There will be no significant difference in teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty in perceptions of Unity of Purpose.

   H_{A4}. Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Unity of Purpose.

5. H_{O5}. There will be no significant difference in teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty in perceptions of Collegial Support.

H_{A5}. Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collegial Support.

6. H_{O6}. There will be no significant difference in teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty in perceptions of Learning Partnerships.

   H_{A6}. Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Learning Partnerships.

The six goals of this chapter were to (a) explain the research design of this study, (b) describe the subject and explain the sample selection process, (c) identify and describe the instrumentation, (d) explain the data collection process, (e) provide a justification for the analytical methods used, and (f) note any limitations of this study.

Research Design

To determine differences in teachers' perceptions of differing school cultures and levels of school-wide poverty, a quantitative causal-comparative one-way analysis was conducted. The study was a non-experimental, between-groups design. Descriptive analyses of the survey data were also explored. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2013) noted that causal-comparative strategies are appropriate when the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variable. According to Creswell (2013), "the theory becomes a framework for the entire study, an organizing model for the research questions or hypotheses and for the data collection procedure" (p. 125). Creswell noted that with the objective of testing or verifying a theory rather than developing it, the researcher advances a theory, collects data to test it, and reflects on the confirmation or rejection of the results.

Sample

Sampling is the process of selecting individuals from a population. A causal-comparative strategy uses at least two populations from which to choose individuals because the independent variable is a pre-existing condition. From these populations, a convenience sample was taken and included the teachers who took the survey at their schools. Convenience sampling involves proximity and accessibility of the participants, includes whoever is available at the time of the study, and includes no probability sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The independent variable of all six hypotheses was the level of school-wide poverty of the school settings of the participating teachers; thus, the variable constituted a preexisting condition and could not be manipulated.

In the 2015-2016 school year, several principals were asked if they were willing to conduct a survey in their school. Of the eight schools contacted, six of the school principals conducted the survey with their teachers. Schools chosen were from the same rural region of Arkansas. This study used teachers from two rural 2A high schools (one moderately low level and one moderately high-level poverty) and two rural 5A high schools (one moderately low level and one moderately high-level poverty). Schools were chosen based on their poverty level in 2013, and all six schools operated with a Grade 9-12 configuration. For this study, moderately low poverty schools were schools with below 55% of students receiving free or reduced-cost lunches, and moderately high poverty schools were schools with 55% or above with students receiving free or reduced lunches.

School A, a 2A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 361 students, made up of 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan, 0.3% Asian, 0.6% Black/African American, 2.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 96.4% White. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 50% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 7% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School A received a rating of Achieving for literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement for mathematics. In addition, School A was rated as Needs Improvement in the graduation rate set by the state. The overall school status of School A was Needs Improvement. There were 20 teachers that participated.

School B, a 2A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 285 students, made up of 1.1% American Indian/Alaskan, 0.7% Black/African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, and 92.3% White. Of the student body, 5% was considered limited in English proficiency, 65% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 9% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School B received a rating of Achieving for literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement for mathematics. In addition, School B was rated as Achieving in the graduation rate set by the state. The overall school status for school B was Needs Improvement. There were 25 teachers that participated.

School C, a 5A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 915 students, made up 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan, 1.1% Asian, 2.4% Black/African American, 3.2% Hispanic/Latino, 89.5% White, and 3.5% reporting two or more races. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 40% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 14% of the students were eligible to receive special

education services. School C received a rating of Needs Improvement in literacy and a rating of Achieving in mathematics. In addition, School C was rated as Achieving in the graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School C was Needs Improvement. There were 25 teachers that participated.

School D, a 5A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 810 made up of 5% American Indian/Alaskan, 1.1% Asian, 61% Black/African American, 0.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 31.1% White, and 3.1% reported two or more races. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 61% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 12% of the students were eligible to receive special education services. School D received a rating of Needs Improvement in literacy and a rating of Achieving in mathematics. In addition, School D was rated as Achieving in graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School D was Needs Improvement. There were 54 teachers that participated. Teacher responses from School A and C made up one sample (lower school-wide poverty), and those from Schools B and D made up the other sample (higher school-wide poverty) to provide for the between-groups analyses.

School E, a 2A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 371 made up of 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan, 0.8% Black/African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 94.9% White, and 0% reported two or more races. Of this student body, 1% was considered limited in English proficiency, 60.25% received free or reduced-cost lunches, and 7% were eligible to receive special education services. School E received a rating of Achieving in literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement in mathematics. In

addition, School E was rated as Needs Improvement in graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School E was Needs Improvement.

School F, a 3A rural high school, had an average daily membership of 396 made up of 2.5% American Indian/Alaskan, 1.3% Asian, 0.8% Black/African American, 0.3% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.8% Hispanic/Latina, 90.4% White, and 2% reported two or more races. Of this student body, no data were available on limited English proficiency, 58% received free or reduced-cost lunch items, and 13% were eligible to receive special education services. School F received a rating of Needs Improvement in literacy and a rating of Needs Improvement in mathematics. In addition, School E was rated Needs Improvement in graduation rate set by the state. The overall status of School F was Needs Improvement.

Instrumentation

The researcher constructed this study around the six cultural components identified by Valentine and Gruenert (2006) that served as the dependent variables. The survey measures perception of shared values and beliefs, the designs of behavior, and the interactions among teachers in the school. Each factor measures a unique aspect of the school's collaborative culture (Valentine, 2006). The factor definitions are given, and the additional sentences provide more detail about the concepts associated with each factor.

Valentine and Gruenert (2006) surveyed teachers in 23 elementary schools in three districts in Missouri in the spring of 2007. The survey included the six factors: Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships. Respondents reported their perceptions on a 5-point Likert scale with a range of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly

disagree). The authors reported that the Cronbach's Alpha Factor Reliability Coefficients on the cognitive items of the six components were as follows: Collaborative Leadership (.910), Teacher Collaboration (.834), Professional Development (.867), Unity of Purpose (.821), Collegial Support (.796), and Learning Partnership (.658). Based on these findings, the instrument was deemed to be reliable for the current study.

Data Collection Procedures

Etikan et al. (2016) wrote that when selecting the participants for a quantitative study, the researcher must consider the procedures for the study and determine a method of participant selection to ensure that results can be generalized. The data collection and management procedures began with approval from the Institutional Review Board. After the Institutional Review Board Committee approved the proposal, the superintendents of the six school districts represented in the study received a letter from the researcher requesting permission to conduct the proposed study. Once permission was granted, the researcher sent letters to the principals in the six districts to inform the principals about the details of the study.

The instrument was sent to the Principal of each school as a hard copy and was not conducted online. During a Spring 2015 faculty meeting, each principal handed out the surveys and asked the teachers to answer them. The hard copies of the survey were secured at all times in the researcher's work or home office and will be destroyed three years after completion of this study. The surveys were picked up at each school.

Analytical Methods

In the present study, the survey was offered to each teacher in Grades 9-12 at six of the participating schools, and teachers voluntarily completed the school culture survey.

The data from the surveys were collected, and the results were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. Descriptive statistics were used to accurately and efficiently describe the information derived from multiple scores (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences software was used to calculate the means, standard deviations, and frequencies for each independent and dependent variable. The results of these analyses were used to accept or reject the hypotheses.

A causal-comparative, non-experimental strategy was used in this study. Six one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The independent variable of all of the hypotheses was the level of school-wide poverty of the schools with two levels, moderately lower and moderately higher school-wide poverty. The dependent variables for the six hypotheses were Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose, and learning partnership, respectively. To test the null hypotheses, the researcher used a two-tailed test with a .05 level of significance. Pallant (2007) indicated that an alternative to account for a Type 1 error is to apply a Bonferroni adjustment to the alpha level by dividing the alpha level of .05 by the number of comparisons. Because the sample numbers in the two levels of the independent variable, gender, were imbalanced, no statistical analysis was conducted. Therefore, a Bonferroni correction was used because multiple comparisons were being employed (.05/6 = .008). The researcher explored whether the level of school-wide poverty within secondary schools in rural Arkansas affected teacher perceptions of school culture. Findings provided insight for those working within rural secondary schools, specifically rural high schools.

Limitations

A limitation of this particular study was that the population included teachers from only six rural high schools in Arkansas. Although eight school districts were approached, only six schools chose to participate. The researcher also did not have control over the quality of the education, the certifications obtained by each of the teachers, or the years of experience in the teaching profession for the teachers surveyed. In addition, because the schools were small rural schools, the numbers of teachers completing the surveys in each school was small.

In general, there are limitations to studies that involve research conducted through surveying. Limitations are those factors that influence the interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2013). Specific to surveys, Whicher and Wu (2015) wrote that the participants might not feel encouraged to provide accurate, honest answers. Because the survey was distributed at the different schools by the principal, the researcher could not control the timing or the way the surveys were distributed. If the surveys were distributed late in the school day, the teachers might have been tired or less motivated to give attention to their responses. In addition, participants might not have felt comfortable providing answers that unfavorably presented themselves. The survey also required teachers to remember specific episodes in school. Therefore, they might have lacked a clear memory to respond to some of the prompts correctly.

Additionally, surveys with closed-ended questions may have a lower validity rate than other question types because the answers are limited and the persons taking the surveys are limited to what and how the questions can be answered. The number of respondents who choose to respond to a survey question might be different from those

who chose not to respond, thus creating bias. Furthermore, survey question-answer options could lead to unclear data because certain answer options might be interpreted differently by respondents (Gay et al., 2013). Research inquiry on school culture and its variables about the survey are dependent upon the realities of procurement validity.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to determine the effects of teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 grade teachers at participating schools. Using IBM Statistical Packages for the Social Science Version 22, a one-way, between groups ANOVA was run for the six hypotheses. Before running the statistical analysis, the assumption of normality and homogeneity of variances were checked. Also, descriptive statistics and inferential results were reported.

Hypothesis 1

H_{O1} stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collaborative Leadership measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12 teachers in four rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A1} stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collaborative Leadership. Before conducting the ANOVA, the researcher screened for outliers, and the data were examined for the assumptions of independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Table 1 displays the group means and standard deviations for

perceptions of Collaborative Leadership by teachers at moderately high and moderately low poverty schools.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Collaborative Leadership by Teachers at Moderately High and Moderately Low Poverty Schools

School Type	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Moderately Low Poverty	41.59	5.48	63
Moderately High Poverty	34.92	8.90	97
Total	37.54	8.38	160

To test the assumption of normality, histograms, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistics, were examined for each group. Results for the KS tests revealed no significant deviation from a normal distribution of scores for the moderately low poverty group, $D(63) = .08$, $p > .05$, but a significant deviation was revealed for the moderately high poverty, $D(97) = .13$, $p < .05$. The shape of the histogram for the moderately low group appeared normal, but the histogram for the moderately high group did display slight negative skewness. However, ANOVA is known to be robust to violations of normal distribution (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2015). Results of Levene's test revealed a violation of homogeneity of variances among the groups on perceptions of Collaborative Leadership, $F(1, 158) = 11.21$, $p = .001$. An examination of box and whisker plots for each set of poverty levels revealed three extreme outliers for the moderately low group and one extreme outlier for the moderately high group. However, a decision was made to keep these four cases to preserve the equal sample size across all groups in the analysis.

A one-way, between groups ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of Collaborative Leadership

Sources	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	1699.08	1699.08	28.38	.000
Within groups	158	9458.61	59.87		
Total	159	11157.69			

Results of the one-way, between groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Collaborative Leadership, $F(1, 158) = 6.15$, $p = .014$ (one-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collaborative Leadership, was supported. The means of each group are displayed in Figure 1.

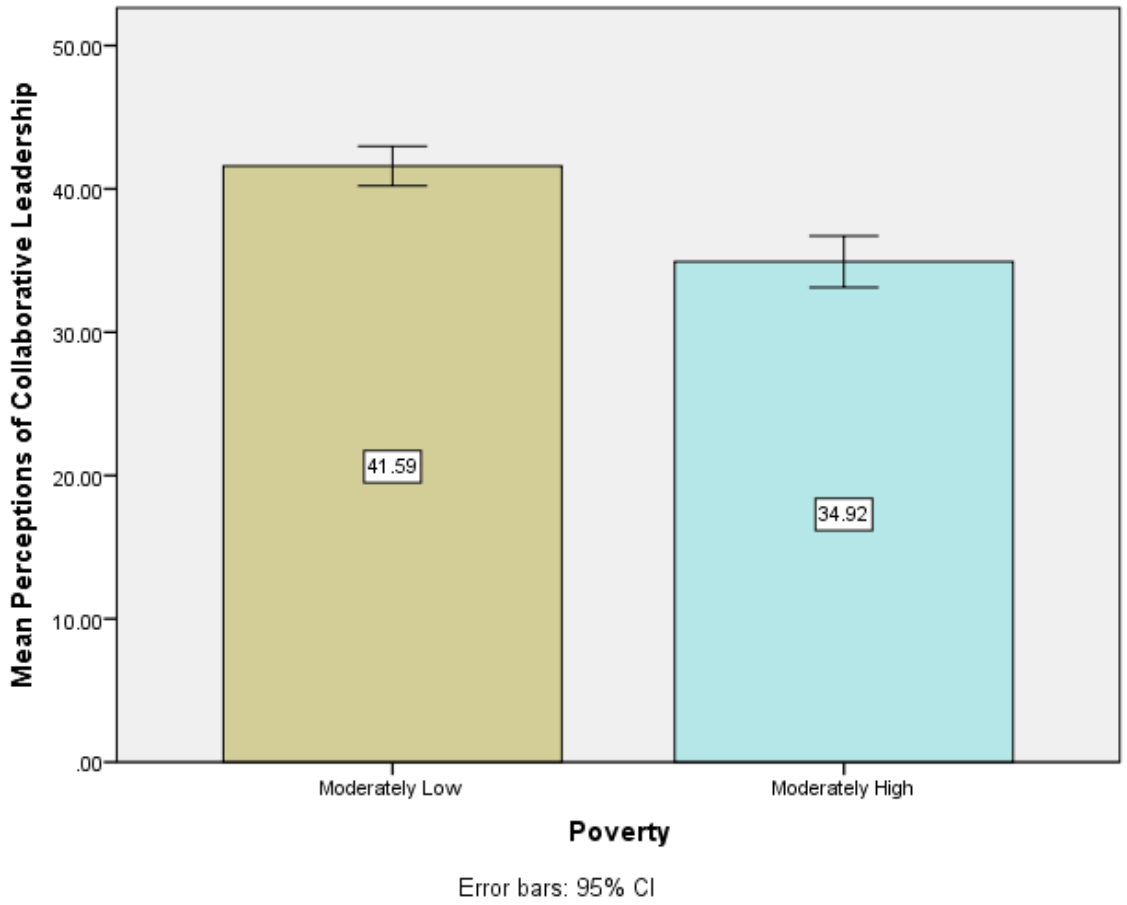

Figure 1. Mean perceptions of Collaborative Leadership.

On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty (M = 34.92, SD = 8.90) scored significantly lower in their perception of Collaborative Leadership compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty (M = 41.59, SD = 5.48). The magnitude of this difference is considered a small effect size (d = 0.09), according to Cohen (1988).

Hypothesis 2

H_{O2} stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Teacher Collaboration measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12 teachers in four rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A1} stated that teachers at schools with

moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration. Before conducting the ANOVA, the researcher screened for outliers, and the data were examined for the assumptions of independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Table 3 displays the group means and standard deviations for perceptions of Teacher Collaboration by teachers at moderately high and moderately low poverty schools.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Teacher Collaboration by Teachers at Moderately High and Moderately Low Poverty Schools

School Type	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Moderately Low Poverty	19.40	3.40	63
Moderately High Poverty	17.50	3.69	97
Total	18.25	3.69	160

To test the assumption of normality, histograms, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistics, were examined for each group. Results for the KS tests revealed no significant deviation from a normal distribution of scores for the moderately low poverty group, $D(63) = .11$, $p > .05$, and for the moderately high poverty, $D(97) = .10$, $p > .05$. The shape of the histogram for both groups appeared normal. Results of Levene's test revealed no violation of homogeneity of variances among the groups on perceptions of Teacher Collaboration, $F(1, 158) = 0.07$, $p = .793$. An examination of box and whisker plots for each set of poverty levels revealed no extreme outliers for the moderately low group and one outlier for the moderately high group. However, a decision was made to

keep this case to preserve the equal sample size across all groups in the analysis. A one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of Teacher Collaboration

Sources	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	136.67	136.67	10.66	.001
Within groups	158	2025.33	12.82		
Total	159	2162.00			

Results of the one-way, between groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Teacher Collaboration, $F(1, 158) = 10.66$, $p = .001$ (one-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration, was supported. The means of each group are displayed in Figure 2.

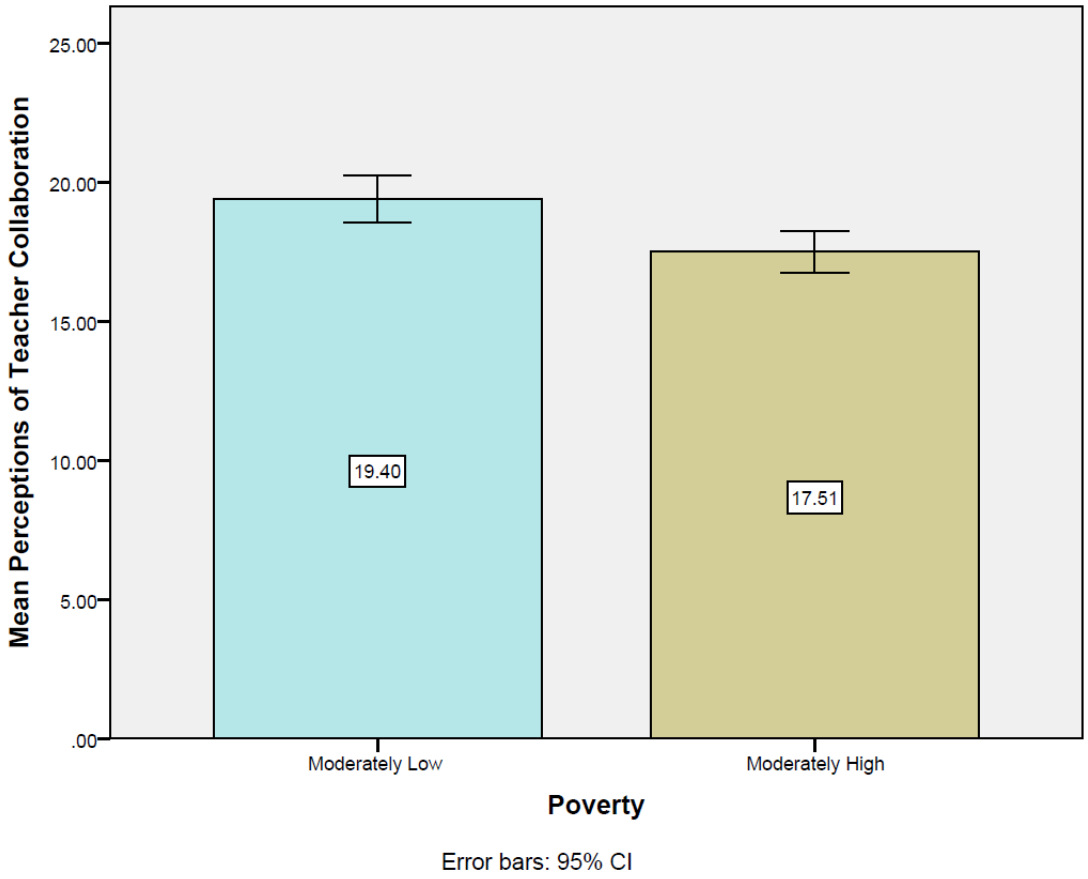

Figure 2. Mean perceptions of Teacher Collaboration.

On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty (M = 17.50, SD = 3.69) scored significantly lower in their perceptions of Teacher Collaboration compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty (M = 19.40, SD = 3.40). The magnitude of this difference is considered a medium effect size (d = 0.53), according to Cohen (1988).

Hypothesis 3

H_{O3} stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on

their perceptions of Professional Development measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12 teachers in four rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A3} stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Professional Development. Before conducting the ANOVA, the researcher screened for outliers, and the data were examined for the assumptions of independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Table 5 displays the group means and standard deviations for perceptions of Professional Development by teachers at moderately high and moderately low poverty schools.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Professional Development by Teachers at Moderately High and Moderately Low Poverty Schools

School Type	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Moderately Low Poverty	19.68	2.12	63
Moderately High Poverty	18.70	0.27	97
Total	19.09	0.20	160

To test the assumption of normality, histograms, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistics, were examined for each group. Results for the KS tests revealed no significant deviation from a normal distribution of scores for the moderately low poverty group, $D(63) = .13$, $p > .05$, or for the moderately high poverty group, $D(97) = .16$, $p > .05$. The shapes of the histograms for both groups appeared normal. Results of Levene's test revealed a violation of homogeneity of variances among the groups on perceptions of Professional Development, $F(1, 158) = 1.71$, $p = .001$. An examination of box and

whisker plots for each set of poverty levels revealed no extreme outliers for the moderately low group and three outliers for the moderately high group. However, a decision was made to keep these three cases to preserve the sample size across all groups in the analysis. A one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of Professional Development

Sources	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	36.80	36.79	6.15	.014
Within groups	158	945.98	5.99		
Total	159	982.78			

Results of the one-way, between groups ANOVA indicated no significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Professional Development, $F(1, 158) = 6.15$, $p = .014$ (one-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Professional Development, was not supported. The means of each group are displayed in Figure 3.

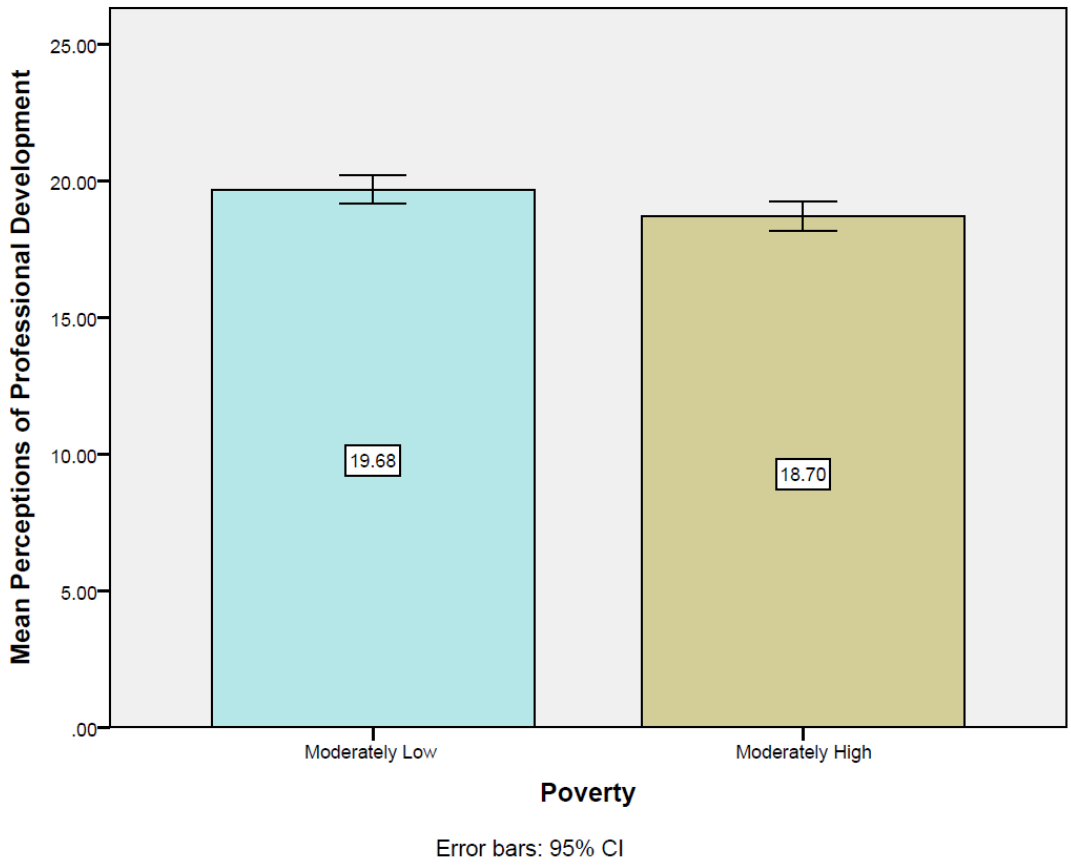

Figure 3. Mean perceptions of Professional Development.

On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty (M = 18.70, SD = 0.27) did not score significantly different in their perceptions of Professional Development compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty (M = 19.86, SD = 2.12). Therefore, any difference between the groups was by chance and not the independent variable.

Hypothesis 4

H_{O4} stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Unity of Purpose measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12

teachers in four rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A4} stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Unity of Purpose. Before conducting the ANOVA, the researcher screened for outliers, and the data were examined for the assumptions of independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Table 7 displays the group means and standard deviations for perceptions of Unity of Purpose by teachers at moderately high and moderately low poverty schools.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Unity of Purpose by Teachers at Moderately High and Moderately Low Poverty Schools

School Type	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Moderately Low Poverty	20.18	2.34	63
Moderately High Poverty	18.25	3.00	97
Total	19.00	2.91	160

To test the assumption of normality, histograms, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistics, were examined for each group. Results for the KS tests revealed no significant deviation from a normal distribution of scores for the moderately low poverty group, $D(63) = .17$, $p > .05$, and the moderately high poverty group, $D(97) = .14$, $p > .05$. The shapes of the histograms for both groups appeared normal. Results of Levene's test revealed a violation of homogeneity of variances among the groups on perceptions of Unity of Purpose, $F(1, 158) = 11.21$, $p = .001$. An examination of box and whisker plots for each set of poverty levels revealed two outliers for the moderately low group and four outliers for the moderately high group. However, a decision was made to keep these six

cases to preserve the sample size across all groups in the analysis. A one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of Unity of Purpose

Sources	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	141.85	141.85	18.60	.000
Within groups	158	1205.14	7.63		
Total	159	1347.00			

Results of the between groups one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Unity of Purpose, $F(1, 158) = 28.38$, $p = .000$ (one-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. As a result of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Unity of Purpose, was supported. The means of each group are displayed in Figure 4.

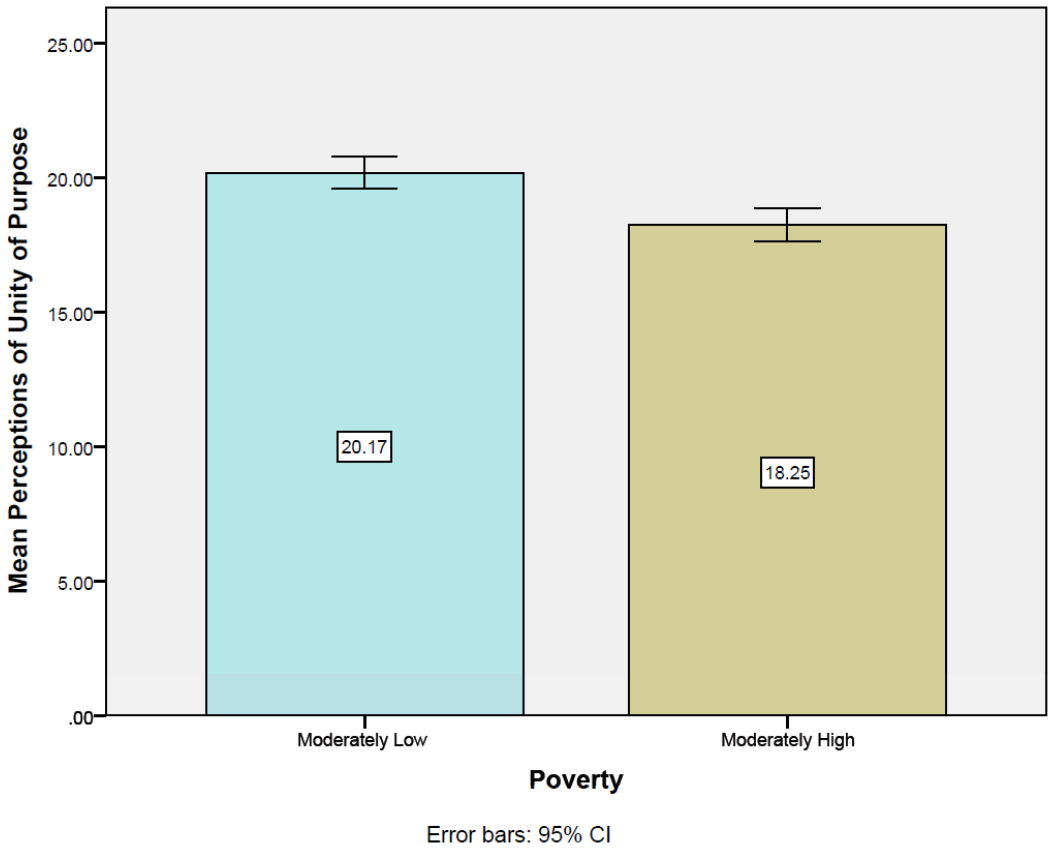

Figure 4. Mean perceptions of Unity of Purpose.

On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty (M = 18.25, SD = 3.00) scored significantly lower in their perceptions of Unity of Purpose compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty (M = 20.18, SD = 2.34. The magnitude of this difference is considered a large effect size (d = 0.72), according to Cohen (1988).

Hypothesis 5

H_{O5} stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collegial Support measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12 teachers in four rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A5} stated that teachers at schools with

moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collegial Support. Before conducting the ANOVA, the researcher screened for outliers, and the data were examined for the assumptions of independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Table 9 displays the group means and standard deviations for the perceptions of Collegial Support by teachers at moderately high and moderately low poverty schools.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Collegial Support by Teachers at Moderately High and Moderately Low Poverty Schools

School Type	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Moderately Low Poverty	15.83	1.80	63
Moderately High Poverty	14.71	2.59	97
Total	15.15	2.37	160

To test the assumption of normality, histograms, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistics, were examined for each group. Results for the KS tests revealed no significant deviation from a normal distribution of scores for the moderately low poverty group, $D(63) = .21$, $p > .05$, and the moderately high poverty group, $D(97) = .24$, $p > .05$. The shape of the histogram for the moderately low group appeared normal. However, the histogram for the moderately high group did display slight negative skewness. Nevertheless, ANOVA is known to be robust to violations of normal distribution (Leech et al., 2015). Results of Levene's test revealed a violation of homogeneity of variances among the groups on the perceptions of Collegial Support, $F(1, 158) = 4.14$, $p = .004$. An examination of box and whisker plots for each set of poverty levels revealed one extreme

outlier for the moderately low group and two outliers for the moderately high group. However, a decision was made to keep these three cases to preserve the sample size across all groups in the analysis. A one-way, between-groups ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of Collegial Support

Sources	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	47.40	47.40	8.89	.003
Within groups	158	842.10	5.34		
Total	159	890.40			

Results of the one-way, between groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference in the perception of Collegial Support, $F(1, 158) = 8.89$, $p = .003$ (one-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collegial Support, was supported. The means of each group are displayed in Figure 5.

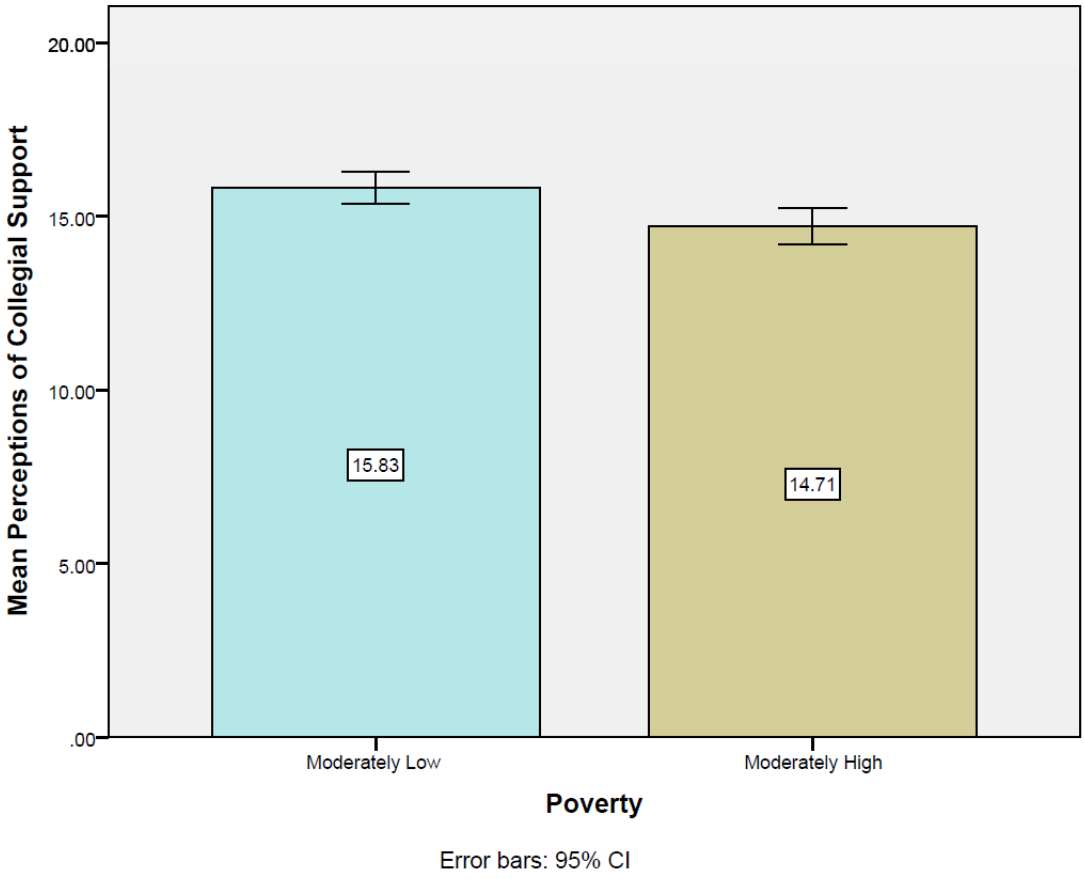

Figure 5. Mean perceptions of Collegial Support.

On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty (M = 14.71, SD = 2.59) scored significantly lower in their perceptions of Collegial Support compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty (M = 15.83, SD = 1.80). The magnitude of this difference is considered a medium effect size (d = 0.50), according to Cohen (1988).

Hypothesis 6

H_{O6} stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Learning Partnerships measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-

12 teachers in four rural Arkansas high schools. H_{A6} stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Learning Partnerships. Before conducting the ANOVA, the researcher screened for outliers, and the data were examined for the assumptions of independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Table 11 displays the group means and standard deviations for the perceptions of Learning Partnerships by teachers at moderately high and moderately low poverty schools.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions of Learning Partnerships by Teachers at Moderately High and Moderately Low Poverty Schools

School Type	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Moderately Low Poverty	13.65	2.34	63
Moderately High Poverty	12.35	2.36	97
Total	12.86	0.19	160

To test the assumption of normality, histograms, as well as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistics, were examined for each group. Results for the KS tests revealed no significant deviation from a normal distribution of scores for the moderately low poverty group, $D(63) = .18$, $p > .05$, or for the moderately high poverty group, $D(97) = .10$, $p > .05$. The shape of the histogram for the moderately low group did display a slight negative skewness. However, ANOVA is known to be robust to violations of normal distribution (Leech et al., 2015). The histogram of the moderately high group appeared normal. Results of Levene's test revealed a violation of homogeneity of variances among

the groups on perceptions of Learning Partnerships, $F(1, 158) = 11.67$, $p = .001$. An examination of box and whisker plots for each set of poverty levels revealed one extreme outlier for the moderately low group and one outlier for the moderately high group. However, a decision was made to keep these two cases to preserve the sample size across all groups in the analysis. A one-way, between groups ANOVA was conducted to test the hypothesis. Results of the analysis are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of Learning Partnerships

Sources	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between groups	1	64.58	64.58	11.67	.001
Within groups	158	874.40	5.53		
Total	159	938.98			

Results of the one-way, between groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Learning Partnerships, $F(1, 158) = 11.67$, $p = .001$ (one-tailed). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Learning Partnerships, was supported. The means of each group are displayed in Figure 6.

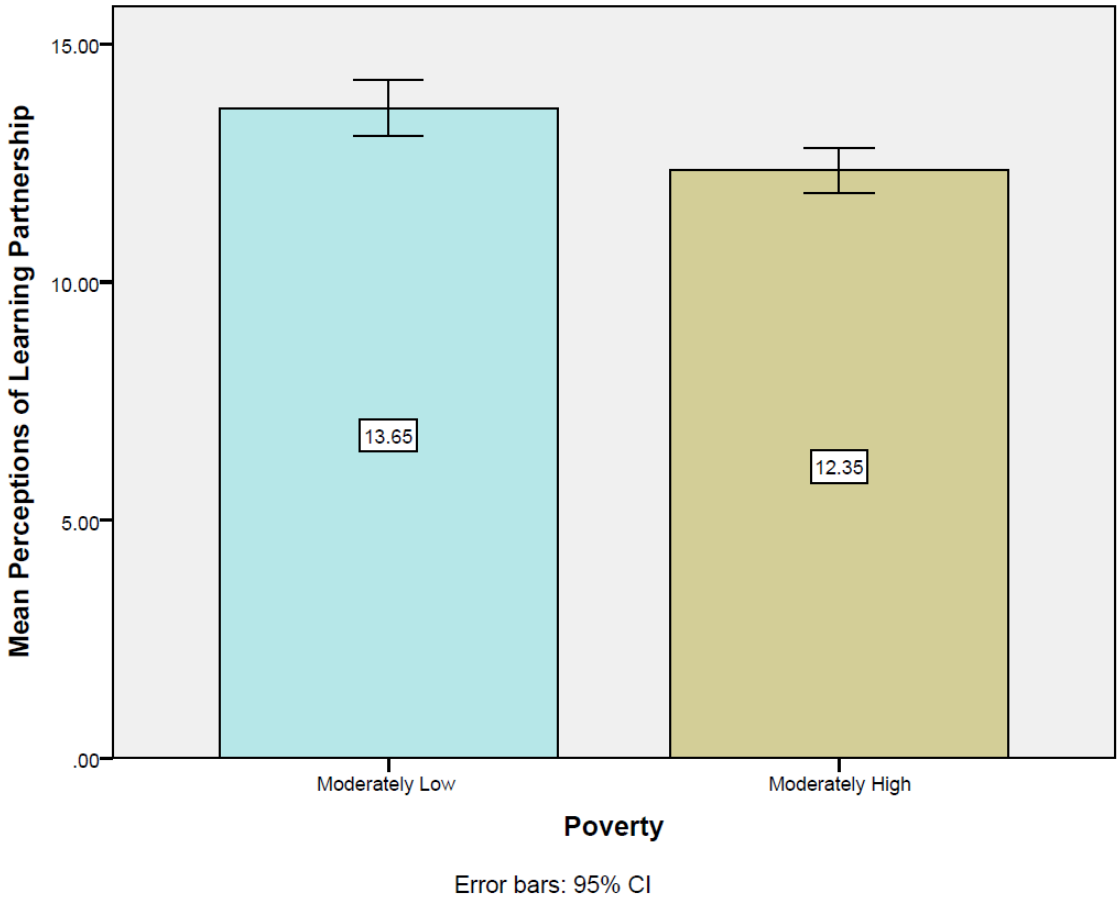

Figure 6. Mean perceptions of Learning Partnerships.

On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty (M = 12.35, SD = 2.36) scored significantly lower on their perceptions of Learning Partnerships compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty (M = 13.65, SD = 2.34). The magnitude of this difference is considered a medium effect size (d = 0.60), according to Cohen (1988).

Summary

Five of the six null hypotheses were rejected. Only results associated with Hypothesis 3, perception of Professional Development, did not indicate a significant

difference between the two groups of teachers. Table 13 summarizes the statistics of this study.

Table 13

Summary of Statistically Significant Results for Hypotheses 1-6

Hyp.	Significant Result	*p*	*d*
1	Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower on Collaborative Leadership	.000	0.09
2	Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower on Teacher Collaboration	.001	0.53
3	No statistical difference between groups on Professional Development	NS	NS
4	Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower on Unity of Purpose	.000	0.72
5	Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower on Collegial Support	.003	0.50
6	Teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower on Learning Partnerships	.001	0.60

Significant differences existed with Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6, which included Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnership between teachers from moderately high and moderately low poverty schools. Those responding from moderately high poverty schools had significantly lower perceptions on each of these facets of school culture compared to those from moderately low poverty schools.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Poverty is a variable that might impact school culture. Researchers have questioned how different levels of poverty within school environments impact various factors of school culture, which Valentine and Gruenaret (2006) identified regarding Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships. Because teachers spend more time with students during the day compared to any other adults, it is critical that principals understand their perceptions about school culture. This research study was conducted to determine if a statistically significant difference exists between teachers' perceptions of culture of moderately high poverty schools and teachers' perceptions of culture at schools with moderately low poverty.

The teacher participants were employed at one of six high schools in six different rural school districts located in the state of Arkansas. Each of the high schools was assigned a pseudonym. School A is a 2A high school with a student population of 361 students; 50% of which received free or reduced-cost meals. School B is also a 2A high school with a student population of 285 students; 65% who received free or reduced-cost lunches. School C is a 5A high school and has a student population of 915 students; 40% received free or reduced-cost lunches. School D is a 5A high school, with a student population of 810; 61% received free or reduced-cost lunches. School E is a 2A high

school with a student population of 371; 50.56% received free or reduced-cost lunches. School F is a 3A high school, with a student population of 396; 58% received free or reduced-cost lunch items.

This chapter presents a summary of the research hypotheses and findings. Also, the implication of the relationships between Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships and teacher perceptions are discussed. The purpose of Chapter V is to present the conclusions of the study and the implications for further study.

Conclusions

The researcher compiled and analyzed data from the *School Culture Survey* and conducted appropriate statistical strategies to test the null hypotheses formulated. A quantitative causal-comparative, one-way analysis was conducted to address Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. For each of the items on the survey, the participants reported their perceptions by providing either a 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 with 1 being "strongly agree" and 5 being "strongly disagree." This study was a non-experimental, between groups design. Six one-way ANOVAs were conducted with the level of school-wide poverty of the schools with two levels, moderately lower and moderately higher school-wide poverty, being the independent variable and Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Collegial Support, Unity of Purpose, and Learning Partnerships being the dependent variables. The data from the surveys were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software and to test the null hypothesis, the researcher used a two-tailed test with a .05 level of significance. A Bonferroni correction was used to adjust the

probability value because of the increased risk of Type 1 errors that are more likely to occur when performing multiple statistical tests.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collaborative Leadership measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. The alternative hypothesis stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collaborative Leadership. Results of the one-way, between-groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Collaborative Leadership. The null hypothesis was rejected. On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower in their perception of Collaborative Leadership compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty. The significant difference between the perceptions of those teaching in the moderately high poverty schools compared to those in moderately low poverty schools indicates that higher school-wide poverty has a negative effect on Collaborative Leadership. Thus, teachers at high schools with moderately high poverty have a lower perception of Collaborative Leadership than teachers at schools with moderately low poverty.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Teacher Collaboration measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. The alternative states that

teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration. Results of the one-way, between-groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Teacher Collaboration. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration, was supported. On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower in their perceptions of Teacher Collaboration compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty. The significant difference between the perceptions of those teaching in the moderately high poverty schools compared to those in moderately low poverty schools indicates that higher school-wide poverty has a negative effect on Teacher Collaboration. Therefore, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty have a lower perception of Teacher Collaboration compared to teachers at low poverty high schools.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Professional Development measured by the *School Culture Survey* for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. The alternative stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Professional Development. Results of the one-way, between-groups ANOVA indicated no significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Professional Development. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a

lower perception of Professional Development, was not supported. On average, teachers at schools with moderately high did not score significantly different in their perceptions of Professional Development compared to teachers at schools with moderately low. Therefore, any difference between the groups was by chance and not the independent variable. The significant difference between the perceptions of those teaching in the moderately high poverty schools compared to those in moderately low poverty schools indicates that higher school-wide poverty does not have a negative effect on Professional Development. Findings from the study indicate that overall, the teachers at both high poverty and low poverty schools perceive Professional Development equally as lackluster.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Unity of Purpose measured by the *School Culture Surv*ey for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. The alternative hypothesis stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Unity of Purpose. Results of the between-groups one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Unity of Purpose. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. As a result of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Unity of Purpose, was supported. On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower in their perceptions of Unity of Purpose compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty. The significant difference between the

perceptions of those teaching in the moderately high poverty schools compared to those in moderately low poverty schools indicates that higher school-wide poverty has a negative effect on Unity of Purpose. Thus, overall, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty have lower perceptions of Unity of Purpose than teachers at schools with moderately low poverty.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Collegial Support measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. The alternative hypothesis stated that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collegial Support. Results of the one-way, between-groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference in the perception of Collegial Support. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Collegial Support, was supported. On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower in their perceptions of Collegial Support compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty. The significant difference between the perceptions of those teaching in the moderately high poverty schools compared to those in moderately low poverty schools indicates that higher school-wide poverty has a negative effect on Collegial Support. Therefore, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty had statistically significant lower perceptions of Collegial Support compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 states that no significant difference will exist between teachers at schools with moderately high poverty versus teachers at schools with moderately low poverty on their perceptions of Learning Partnerships measured by the School Culture Survey for 9-12 teachers in six rural Arkansas high schools. The alternative hypothesis states that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Learning Partnerships. Results of the one-way, between-groups ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the two groups on the perception of Learning Partnerships. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Because of this, the alternative hypothesis, that teachers at schools with moderately high poverty will have a lower perception of Learning Partnerships, was supported. On average, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty scored significantly lower on their perceptions of Learning Partnerships compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty. The significant difference between the perceptions of those teaching in the moderately high poverty schools compared to those in moderately low poverty schools indicates that higher school-wide poverty has a negative effect on Learning Partnerships. Therefore, teachers at schools with moderately high poverty have statistically significantly lower perceptions of Learning Partnerships compared to teachers at schools with moderately low poverty.

Implications

When interpreting the conclusions, the researcher compared the findings of this study to the review of literature. There were no close associations in the literature of school-wide poverty to school culture. Sagar (2000) stated that school characteristics are better predictors of student performance than individual poverty levels. Valentine and

Gruenert (2006) stated that school culture is made up of Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Professional Development, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships. The findings of this research indicate that those working in schools of high poverty may need to be able to trust the administration and feel the administration trusts them. Cohen et al. (2011) confirmed that when teachers feel appreciated and wanted, they can have professional, caring relationships with their students.

Findings associated with Collaborative Leadership indicate improvements are necessary. Teachers need to feel a sense of ownership in school culture, and this can be accomplished through Collaborative Leadership. Researchers Valentine and Gruenert (2006) wrote that when teachers engage in Collaborative Leadership, they become empowered, their morale increases, and their classrooms become more conducive to learning. Peterson and Brietzke (1994) also agreed that teachers need to work in a collaborative work environment with their peers, and they need to feel that their principals trust them. Gialamas et al. (2014) affirmed that when principals share responsibilities, they demonstrate trust in their teachers to take leadership roles. Collaborative leaders also seek to continually engage stakeholders in change processes relating to issues of curriculum and instruction, evidence-based practices, and behavior management. Findings from the study indicated that overall, principals should increase opportunities for teachers at moderately high poverty to engage in activities that foster Collaborative Leadership.

Findings associated with Teacher Collaboration also indicate improvements are necessary. A culture of collaboration among teachers recognizes that teachers are the

most influential players within the classrooms and that they must develop meaningful, functioning relationships through thought, planning, and implementation. Teacher collaboration is also key to improving students' academic performance. Szczesiul and Huizenga (2015) asserted that teachers who often engage in collaboration are more likely to endure conflict and differences in viewpoints of their colleagues. Researchers further assert that teachers who often collaborate are better able to support their colleagues' strengths and weaknesses and pool together their ideas and resources (Forte & Flores, 2014; Goddard et al., 2015; Killion, 2015; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2015). Consequently, principals must set aside time for teachers to collaborate on a regular basis and they should create teams that provide opportunities to demonstrate leadership capabilities (Foltos, 2015). Valentine and Gruenert (2006) also contend that teachers who feel they are given the time to build these collaborative relationships would provide a better learning environment in the classroom. Findings from the study indicate that overall, principals should increase opportunities for teachers at schools with moderately high poverty to engage in peer collaboration.

Results associated with professional development indicated that participating teachers perceived it as lacking meaning, or perhaps purpose. Teachers from both types of schools rated Professional Development average, at best. Perhaps this indicates that most teachers in rural Arkansas need different types of opportunities for professional development. Bostic and Matney (2013) contended that professional development is a vital component of effective teaching and learning that can positively influence school culture. Consuegra and Engels (2016) further contended that professional development could positively impact teachers' effectiveness. Denson (2016) noted that when teachers

participate in meaningful professional development, they have an opportunity to co-construct knowledge and improve their pedagogical skills. Orlando (2016) maintained that professional development should be intensive, involve prolonged training sessions, include follow-up, and be aligned with state and national standards. Clark (2016) suggested that professional development improves teachers' content knowledge and teaching skills.

Findings associated with Unity of Purpose also imply that improvements are necessary. Unity of purpose is defined as stakeholders working together for a shared goal (Valentine & Gruenert, 2006). When teachers and the school community embrace a common mission, the degree of Unity of Purpose increases. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) inform that when teachers feel a Unity of Purpose, they tend to see the different component parts of their school environment as pieces of a bigger picture. To the contrary, when major changes take place over a brief amount of time, teachers tend to view initiatives as disassociated from their purpose as educators. Consequently, they may become frustrated, and Unity of Purpose becomes lost. Findings from the study indicate that overall, principals should find ways to implement initiatives over longer periods of time rather than relatively short periods in order to maintain Unity of Purpose.

Findings associated with Collegial Support indicate improvements are necessary. Collegial support is associated with how teachers work together and whether or not they are supportive of each other. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) wrote that Collegial Support occurs when teachers trust each other, value each other's ideas, and assist each other as they work to accomplish the tasks of the school organization. Sergiovanni (1992) described Collegial Support as a professional virtue, and that the more teachers become

self-managed and self-led, direct leadership from the principal becomes less needed. Blackmore et al. (1996) wrote that Collegial Support occurs when teachers view one another with mutual respect, understanding, and a shared responsibility of meeting the needs of students by creating a positive school culture. In addition, positive school culture has a significant influence on the academic and social success of the students within schools (Squires & Kranyik, 1996). Findings from the study indicate that overall, principals who supervise teachers at schools with moderately high poverty should increase opportunities that foster Collegial Support among teachers.

Findings associated with Learning Partnerships indicate improvements are necessary. Strong Learning Partnerships between teachers and parents can help improve students' performance and positively impact school culture. Valentine and Gruenert (2006) wrote that when teachers, parents, and students share common expectations and frequently communicate about student performance, all stakeholders generally accept responsibility for academic outcomes. Results of the study conducted by Mees (2008) indicated that partnerships between school and home change teacher biases about students who live in poverty and that principals must develop a capacity for high levels to work together for the common good of the student without socioeconomic status being a factor. Mees also asserted that principals have a responsibility to establish and maintain a collaborative, problem-solving, intellectual culture that supports teachers as they work to build these critical relationships between teachers, parents, and students. Findings from the study indicate that overall, principals at high schools with moderately high poverty should increase opportunities that foster Learning Partnerships between teachers, parents, and students.

Research has shown that teachers often do not understand the impact that poverty has on school culture and ultimately, on student achievement. Educators' attitudes about poverty impact all aspects of teaching and learning. Although professional development offerings have addressed the impact of poverty achievement, few studies focus on teachers' perceptions of how poverty affects school culture. In the districts that served as the research sites, there are limited professional development offerings which focus on changing the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of experienced teachers of students who attend moderate high poverty high schools. This study has implications for stakeholders who want to improve the culture of their schools.

First, teachers and principals have a primary responsibility to promote academic success for all students. Therefore, teachers must engage in Collaborative Leadership and planning, which positively supports school culture. All stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, district administrators, the community members, and business leaders must assist principals with creating and implementing numerous ongoing opportunities, which support this goal. Principals must also understand how their own leadership styles and relationships with teachers foster culture. Further investigation exploring the impact of poverty on school culture should be conducted at universities, teacher education programs, and educational leadership programs.

Recommendations

Potential for Practice/Policy

The quantitative findings provided strong evidence that principals at rural moderate low poverty high schools could possibly assist principals at rural moderate high poverty high schools with improving school culture. When teachers struggle to believe

that they are participants of Collaborative Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships students will not be as successful as they could be if teachers believed otherwise. Teachers' perceptions about school culture permeate the school's vision, its mission, and their expectations for students. Barriers to the factors of a high-functioning school culture must be diminished, and a positive school environment must be protected (Valentine & Gruenaret, 2006). Principals must be cognizant of the barriers and create ways to overcome them. There is a paucity of research that exclusively focuses on the impact of poverty on the culture of rural high schools. In addition, much of the literature provides suggestions for fostering positive classroom environments but fails to provide specific school-wide strategies for improving culture.

Future Research Considerations

The findings of the study reflect that leaders of moderately high poverty high schools compared to the moderately low poverty schools should recognize and address teacher perceptions of Collaborative leadership, Teacher Collaboration, Unity of Purpose, Collegial Support, and Learning Partnerships. Also, administrators of every high school should attend to teacher perceptions of Professional Development, which according to this researcher's findings, are perceived across campuses as mediocre, at best. Therefore, the researcher recommends the following research be considered:

1. A study using a qualitative approach to examine teachers' perceptions more in-depth,

2. A study to examine the leadership styles of principals who have been successful in maintaining an overall positive school culture in schools of poverty,
3. Investigations into kinds of Professional Development most valued by high school teachers,
4. A study to determine how teachers from elementary and middle schools perceive school culture,
5. Studies designed to investigate whether or not schools' ratings change as teachers' perception of culture changes,
6. Multiple studies to examine small rural Arkansas high schools, and
7. A study to examine the perceptions of the students and parents regarding culture at the high schools represented in this study. This would allow a researcher to uncover parallel areas or domains where multiple groups had similar perceptions. This may lead to areas that would garner increased attention when attempting to affect culture considering the impact it would have on multiple stakeholders.

Although a school's focus should remain on what is best for the students, teachers' perceptions of the school where they are employed could significantly influence the success of each student. In schools of poverty, when it comes to collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, unity of purpose, collegial support, learning partnerships, and even professional development, there is room for improvement. Schools should foster a conducive learning environment not only for the student but also a conducive teaching environment for the teachers. A strong teamwork atmosphere should be promoted

between the teacher- teacher relationship in the school and also between the principal-teacher relationship. Once the teachers feel supported and confident in what is expected in the classroom, student success should come naturally to the educational outcome of the school's overall academic success.

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APPENDIX

HARDING UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Status of Request for Exemption from IRB Review

(For Board Use Only)

Date: 1/8/2015
Proposal Number: 215-002
Title of Project: Effects of School-Wide Poverty Level on 9-12 Rural Teachers' Perceptions of Six School Culture Components
Principal Investigator(s) and Co-Investigator(s): Jackwyln Underwood
junderwood@wccsd.k12.ar.us

■ Research exempted from IRB review.

☐ Research requires IRB review.

☐ More information is needed before a determination can be made. (See attachment.)

I have reviewed the proposal referenced above and have rendered the decision noted above.
This study has been found to fall under the following exemption(s):

1 ☐ 2 ■ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐

In the event that, after this exemption is granted, this research proposal is changed, it may require a review by the full IRB. In such case, a ***Request for Amendment to Approved Research*** form must be completed and submitted.

This exemption is granted for one year from the date of this letter. Renewals will need to be reviewed and granted before expiration.

The IRB reserves the right to observe, review and evaluate this study and its procedures during the course of the study.

Rebecca O. Weaver

Chair
Harding University Institutional Review Board