

**Examining Relationships Among Students' Perception of an Authoritative
Organizational School Climate, Adolescent Competency, and School Roles and
Responsibilities**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perception of their school climate as well as the characteristics and benefits of an authoritative school climate. Participants were students in a high school in Eastern Canada. This quantitative study employed questionnaire surveys for collecting data. Results demonstrated significant relationships between an authoritative school climate and student self-esteem, school engagement, and students' perception of independent academic problem solving. Also, the strength of the relationship between an authoritative climate and students' perception of positive peer evaluations approached the level of significance. Students indicated that in an authoritative school climate, the majority of the school responsibilities were perceived as being taken on primarily by either their peers or themselves. Recommendations for school-wide changes that may foster authoritative school environments are provided.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Joyce and Joe. Their assistance has provided me with the support that I needed to move forward with my education. I would also like to thank William O'Leary who didn't just tell me about the ideals of the social sciences but showed them to me too.

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Chapter I – Introduction and Rationale

Introduction

The creation of this research project was motivated by a desire to understand the ways in which students' perception of school climate is related to students' psychosocial competencies. The current study was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory which holds that all phenomena should be examined at every level of the ecological system. With this in mind, the current study examined relationships between variables operating at the school-wide level of the environment and variables present within students. The study surveyed students in order to better understand the relationships between students' perceptions of school climate and students' self-esteem, prosocial behaviour, and academic engagement. This study also aimed to gain a better understanding of the underlying school roles and responsibilities that are associated with students' perception of school climate. Through gaining a clearer understanding of how students' perception of school climate is related to student competency educational policy-makers and administrators may better be able to design and run schools that are more congruent with the needs of a wide variety of students.

This document is organized into chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction and a rationale for the current study. Chapter two includes a review of relevant literature and concludes with research questions. Chapter three outlines the methodology of the current study. The methodology chapter includes an overview of the informing theoretical framework as well as a description of the participants, materials, and procedures that were used to carry out the research. Chapter four presents the results

of the current study and chapter five discusses implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

Rationale for the Current Study

The field of school climate research is one domain in which relationships between student competencies and variables operating at the school-wide level of the environment are examined (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). The problems that plague the current research on the relationships between school climate and student competency are many. First, little research has been completed that focuses exclusively on how the perception of organizational school climate is related to student competencies (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Second, school climate researchers have yet to construct an original measure which is based on a comprehensive model of socialization (Hetherington, 1993; Pellerin, 2005, 2005). Third, research on the school roles and responsibilities that underlie school-wide environments (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008) is currently lacking.

The present study attempted to address the problems stated above. First, the present study focused exclusively on an examination of ways in which aspects of perceived organizational school climate are related to student competencies. This focus on organizational school climate was assured by carefully wording survey questions so that they asked exclusively about the patterns or rules that operate at a school-wide level. Other school climate surveys often ask not only about organizational school climate but also include questions about the school's ecology, milieu, and culture. Second, this examination constructed and used measure of perceived organizational school climate that is based on a comprehensive model of parental socialization. Third, since little is known about the how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities that is

related to the perception of school climate (Benner et al., 2008), this study attempted to gain some insight by asking students to indicate who they perceived as being most responsible for performing various school roles and responsibilities. Relationships between students' perception of school roles and responsibilities and students' perception of school climate were then examined.

The results of student surveys led to a measurement of each student's perceived organizational school climate. This survey utilized a continuous measure of students' perception of school climate in which a high score indicated the perception of a more authoritative school climate and a low score indicated the perception of a less authoritative school climate. The results of the student surveys also allowed for the school roles and responsibilities that may be related to students' perception of organizational school climate to be classified as falling into one of six categories. These categories are roles that rely upon responsibility being undertaken by: the individual student, students' peers, teachers, other school staff, parents/guardians, and members of the wider community. The above methods of indexing results allowed for the testing of the present study's hypothesis as well as allowing for a description of school roles and responsibilities that may be related to students' perception of school climate.

Based upon past research findings, the current study proposed one hypothesis. It was hypothesized that school organizational climates that are perceived by students as more authoritative would be related to higher levels of student competency. The second component of the current study was exploratory and descriptive in nature and involved an investigation into how students' perception of who is responsible for various school roles may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate.

The following document begins with an introduction to the concept of socialization that is followed by a literature review of research on child socialization in both school and family contexts. The examination of literature justified the development of a two-dimensional model of school climate that relies heavily on the model of parenting styles developed by Diana Baumrind (1971, 1991). This model characterized students' perception of organizational school climate as more or less authoritative. The development and validation of this model and the construction of a measure to accompany it could inform future government policy-makers and school administrators as to how to design and run schools that ensure the best outcomes for all of the children who attend them. The literature review is followed by an outline of the current study's methodology.

Chapter II – Literature Review

Socialization in Schools

In industrialized countries, most children over the age of six spend many hours a day in formal educational settings. The primary objective of this intensive and prolonged education process is to develop academic abilities in children and adolescents. Successful participation in the process of schooling, however, requires the use of not just academic skills but specific social and emotional skills as well. A child in a typical classroom, for example, must learn to work successfully with others, to follow directions when appropriate, and delay gratification when necessary. In other words, schools socialize students through both academic instruction and the qualities and characteristics present in the schools that the children attend.

In this paper, socialization is defined in connection to structural characteristics of the environment that aid in children's development of psychological and social competencies. These structural characteristics of the environment can include both staff and setting characteristics and the qualities inherent in the relationships that youth experience in a school setting. In other words, psychological and social competence of children is shaped by the placement of these children in educational settings. Having now introduced the topic of school socialization it becomes necessary to outline what constitutes competence within a school setting.

The elements of behaviour and character that comprise psychological and social competence have been described in a variety of ways. In general, however, all definitions of psychological, and social competence include the idea that competence should allow individuals to achieve both their own personal goals and to contribute to the achievement of the goals of society. Further, essential to many definitions of competence is the concept that it is the existence of environmental resources and restrictions that allow for the development of competence (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests that successful development of competence consists of being able to achieve personal development while also learning what is expected by the social group. Ford (1992) expanded on this definition of successful competence attainment by explaining that it should include the ability to meet both personal and social goals. It is important to note that the ability to attain both personal and social aims is a process that sometimes results in conflict. For example, a student may wish to develop his/her ability to be self-directing in his/her activities. This particular desire for personal development might, however, conflict with the

implementation of a school curriculum that required all students to study the same material and to have their activities directed by a classroom teacher. In a case such as this, the development of competence would likely involve a period of conflict between personal and social aims. According to current thinking regarding socialization, competence is said to have been achieved when the child has found a solution that resolves the conflict and allows him/her to develop self-direction while also allowing social goals for education to be met (Wentzel & Looney, 2007).

There is an extensive body of literature that illuminates the socialization effects of schools. This research on school socialization effects falls under several areas of enquiry. For example, some research examines the effects of peer relationships within schools (Fabes, Hanish, & Martin, 2003; Wentzel, Filisitti, & Looney, 2006). Other research examines the effects of teacher-student relationships (Aber, Brown, & Jones, 2003; Slavin, Hurley, & Chamberlain, 2003; Weinstein, 2002) within schools. Areas of enquiry that examine school socialization also differ based on their level of analysis. Some areas of enquiry focus on the characteristics of individuals; others examine dyads, and others examine classroom level variables. The variables that were of interest in the current study are those that operate at a school-wide level. One area of educational research that examines school-wide level variables that affect the development of student competence is school climate research.

The methods and categories that are used by school climate researchers were utilized in the current study. In order to help develop an understanding of the ways in which the total environment of a school is examined by school climate researchers it is necessary to describe the characteristics of school climate research. This description of

school climate research is followed by a description of findings from the fields of both school climate research and other school socialization literature.

A Description of School Climate Research

School climate is defined as the total environmental quality of a school (Anderson, 1982). An examination of measures of school climate provides some insight into what aspects of the environment are considered part of school climate. The widely used *The School Climate Survey*, for example, contains seven dimensions of school climate and assesses students' perceptions in the areas of achievement motivation, fairness, order, discipline, parental involvement, sharing of resources, and student interpersonal relationships (Haynes, Emmons, & Comer, 1993). Another frequently used measure of school climate is *The Charles F. Kettering Ltd. School Climate Profile (CFK)*. This measure is comprised of eight subscales. They are: respect, trust, high morale, opportunity for input, continuous academic and social growth, cohesiveness, school renewal, and caring (Johnson & Johnson, 1993, 1997). By looking at the dimensions that are measured by these commonly used surveys we can see that school climate refers to how a school's overall environment is viewed by its community members. Teachers or students might, for example, view their school as a generally respectful environment, an environment that encourages parental involvement, or an environment that provides opportunities for academic and social growth.

Dimensions of school climate are generally divided into five areas: administration, ecology, milieu, organization, and culture (Tagiuri, 1968; Anderson, 1982). Ecology refers to the physical components of a school such as school size and facilities. Studies of school milieu deal with characteristics of individuals in the school. For example, an

examination of the effects of students' social and economic status on outcomes would constitute a school climate study in the area of milieu. Organizational components of school climate include variables that concern patterns or rules that operate at a school-wide level. These organizational components would, for example, include the ways in which members of the school community are segregated, whether or not lessons were mandatory, the ways in which decisions were made within the school, and how students were either disciplined or rewarded within school. The cultural component of school climate is composed of the beliefs and value systems that operate widely within the school. This area of school culture is often seen as a variable that is separate from and causal to school climate (Hoy, 1990). Adding to the understanding of the role of school climate, recent investigations have found that school climate acts as a mediator between school processes and student outcomes (Benner et al., 2008; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). The four components of school climate and the nature of models of school climate are diagramed below in Figure 1.

Since school climate is only one area of research that explores school socialization, the research summarized in the following review focuses on school climate findings but also includes findings from other education research that has measured the socializing effects of variables operating within schools. Further, the review of these findings is grouped under two major headings. These headings relate to Bronfenbrenner's (2005) conception of socialization in which both resources and restrictions must be made available to the child in order for the development of competence to occur. Under the heading of Resources findings are grouped into the categories of protection, provision,

and reward. Under the heading of Restrictions findings are grouped into the categories of consistent rules, maturity demands, and democratic communication/student autonomy.

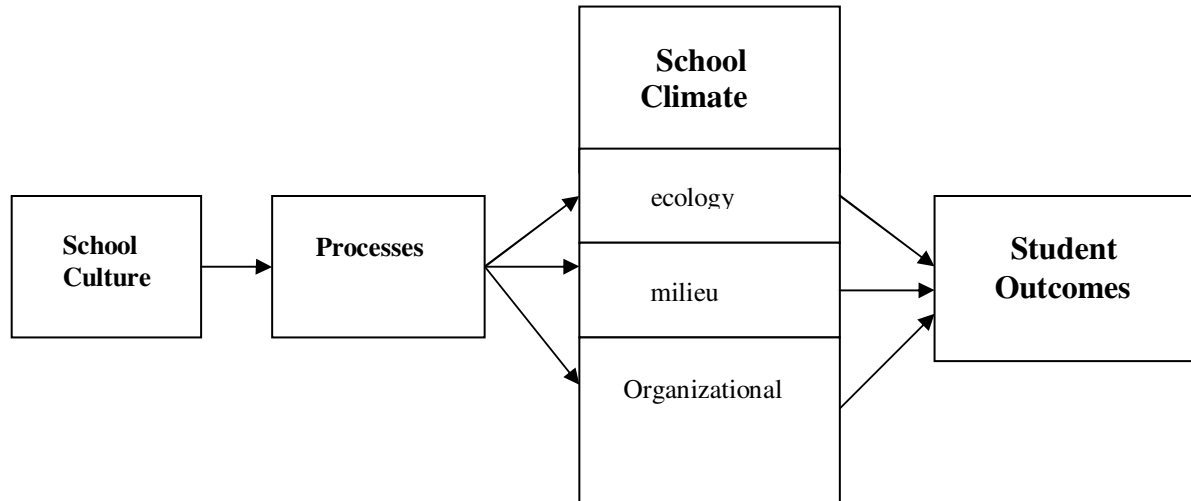


Figure 1. School Climate Model

Note. Adapted From (Way, Reddy, Rhodes, 2007).

Resources

Protection

Based on a definition used in previous school climate research (Shoffner & Vacc, 1999) the category of protection refers to students' perceptions that their school provides a safe environment in which they are not subject to physical harm or emotional harm from staff, students, or other members of the community. The role of students' perceptions of protection from harm has received limited attention in the field of school climate. One exception was found in the study completed by Shoffner & Vacc (1999). In this study, data from the Inviting School Safety Survey was analyzed and it was found

that the lack of safety was one of four significant categories that determined whether or not a school's climate was rated positively. The three other categories that were found to be related to a positive rating of school climate were: valuing the influence of teachers and staff, the amount of stress experienced by the students, and students' positive attitudes toward school.

Though school climate research on the effects of students' perception of safety has been limited, research regarding the effects of violence exposure in schools is substantial. Exposure to violence in schools has been linked to multiple externalizing and internalizing problems such as delinquency and anxiety (O'Keefe, 1997; Mrug, Loosier, & Windle, 2008). Though little research exists in this area, it seems reasonable to surmise that students' perceptions of the level of school safety act as a mediator between violent school incidents and negative outcomes. Considering this relationship between perceived environment and outcomes, it seems important to include the category of protection in measures of overall school climate in order to learn how students' perceptions of school climate are related to student competency.

Provision

Based on definitions used in previous school climate research (Saunders & Saunders, 2002; Samdal et al., 1998) provision refers to students' perceptions that their school environment provides them with the resources that they require in order to be successful students. This could include both help with learning and emotional support. Previous research that focuses exclusively on students' perceptions of available provisions is limited. However, a study of school climate by Saunders and Saunders (2002) examined students' perceptions of how much academic support was available.

The availability of academic support was identified as one factor that caused students to rate their current school's climate as superior to their past school's climate. This same study also found that students' perceived ability to access help from a school counselor was related to a higher rating of the school's climate. Moreover, in the study by Samdal et al. (1998) perceived practical support was also found to make a significant contribution to students' satisfaction at school. Aside from consideration of the relevant research, the recent call by educators to focus on developing full-service schools (Bundy, 2005) also makes an examination of the effects of such provisions on student outcomes salient. Having now supported the inclusion of the variable of provision, a discussion of reward as a variable that may be significantly related to students' perception of school climate follows.

Reward

Based on definitions used in previous school climate research (McEvoy & Welker, 2000) the category of reward refers to students' perceptions that their efforts and accomplishments are rewarded with some form of positive reinforcement. Some data is available regarding the relationship between students' perception of receiving rewards and resulting outcomes. Davis, Winsler, and Middleton (2006) found that perception of reward was related to the later motivation and performance of college students. In their study Kennelly and Mount (1985) found that the academic achievement of boys was related to the boys' perceptions of rewards. While school climate research rarely focuses specifically on the effects of perceived rewards, McEvoy and Welker (2000) reviewed school climate literature and identified the pervasive use of positive reinforcement rather than punitive interventions as an important factor in improving school climate.

Other research has found that while some praise does improve performance, an excessive use of praise leads to a decrease in intrinsic motivation (Lepper & Henderlong, 2000). This body of research suggests that while praise and other forms of reward do play a role in developing competence, the use of praise must be used judiciously, balanced by the presence of other resources and restrictions in the environment. Having now discussed some resources that have been postulated to play an important role in the relationship between perceived school climate and competence a discussion of those aspects of restriction that have also been shown to be related to competence follows.

Restrictions

Consistent Rules

Based on definitions used in previous school climate research (Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007) and for the purposes of the current study, the classification of consistent rules pertains to students' perception that the rules within the school-wide community are predictable, applied uniformly, and non-punitive. This definition of consistent rules is present in the Perceived School Climate Scale (Felner et al. 1997). This operational definition has also been utilized by several researchers and found to be related to students' wellbeing (Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Skinner and Wellborn, 1997; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). One major area of agreement within the field of school climate is that the perception of consistent rules within the school is related to students' competence. Numerous studies have found that if students perceive school rules to be unfair or unclear then their rating of the school's climate is low and psychosocial and academic competency is also low (Bauchman & O'Malley 1986; Connell & Wellborn 1991; Epstein & Karweit 1983; Kuperminc et al., 1997; Roeser & Eccles, 1998).

Maturity Demands

Based on previous school socialization literature (Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994; Rubie, 2004) maturity demands are defined as students' perception that success in school is possible but only if each student performs to the best of his/her ability. A school's maturity demands might be perceived by students as occurring at one of three levels. Maturity demands may be too low, too high, or developmentally appropriate. A student who experienced a school's maturity demands as too low would generally put in minimal effort and would rarely be challenged to develop new academic skills. A student who experienced a school's maturity demands as too high would generally feel that any effort he/she put in was futile and would not lead to success. A student who experienced a school's maturity demands as developmentally appropriate would generally feel that success in school was possible but only if he/she performed to the best of his/her ability.

Multiple research findings have verified a connection between teachers' maturity demands and student outcomes (Ryan et al., 1994). Aspects of teacher-student relationships (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Cooper & Good, 1983; Cooper, 1985) and whole class factors (Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshal, 1984; Rubie, 2004) have both been shown to communicate maturity demands to students. Whole class factors have, however, been found to contribute more to student success than do elements of individual teacher-student relationships (Rubie-Davies, 2007).

Some processes that have been shown to contribute to developmentally appropriate maturity demands at the classroom level are using mainly interest-based grouping and emphasizing task mastery goals (Brattesani et al., 1984). More recent studies by Rubie (2004; Rubie-Davies, 2007) identified the using of mixed-ability

groups, closely monitoring student progress, giving high levels of feedback, setting clear goals, providing students with choices, communicating more extensive explanations and instructions, using more high-order questions, and using more positive behaviour management as processes by which high maturity demands are communicated to an entire classroom of students.

Some research has shown that the past practice of school-wide grouping of students by ability lowered the academic achievement of students (Oakes, 1985). This lowering of students' academic achievement may be due to students' perceptions that by grouping them based on ability, their school is requiring them to live up to very low maturity demands. In light of these past research findings the current study attempted to increase the understanding of how the perception of developmentally appropriate maturity demands at the school-wide level affects student outcomes.

Democratic Communication/ Student Autonomy

Based partly on definitions used in previous school climate research (Vienno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2005) democratic communication is defined as a process that fosters a form of student autonomy that is bounded by what is valued and tolerated by that student's larger community. Within the parameters of what is acceptable to the community, each student is afforded opportunities to express opinions that are given weight equal to that of any other member of the school community. The power of these opinions to create change is related to how much support other members of the community give to that opinion. Many educational theorists and reformers have long championed the need for the increased democratization of schools (Bellamy, 2002; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Neill, 1991; Greenberg, 1995). Despite these long

standing pleas for an atmosphere of increased social equality within schools, empirical research findings on the effects of democratic school climate have only recently begun to emerge.

Research in the field of school climate has found that a democratic school climate helps students to develop responsibility and leads to increased participation in school activities (Torney-Purta, 2002). One study (Vieno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2005) examined the role played by democratic school practices. These practices included student participation in making rules and organizing events, and freedom of expression. This study found that democratic school climate did play a significant role in whether or not students rated their schools as having a strong sense of community.

The construct of democratic communication is similar to and likely overlaps with the construct of student autonomy that is often utilized in school climate research. The construct of student autonomy has been consistently linked by school climate researchers to the competency of students (Bauchman & O'Malley 1986; Connell and Wellborn, 1991; Epstein & Karweit, 1983; Kuperminc et al. 1997; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Measures of student autonomy ask students if they feel they have a say in how things work in school, if they help decide how class time is spent, if they are given a chance to help make decisions, and if they are asked what they would like to learn about (Way et al., 2007). Virtually identical questions are used for the purpose of indexing democratic school climate (Vieno et al., 2005). If one accepts that the constructs of student autonomy and democratic school climate are closely related, then the consistently identified importance of student autonomy in schools lends additional support to the premise that democratic communication is related to students' competence. While school climate

researchers have yet to either adequately differentiate or merge the constructs of student autonomy and democratic communication, the present study attempted to overcome this difficulty by examining democratic communication as a meaningful variable that encompasses both constructs.

Protection, provision, reward, consistent rules, developmentally appropriate maturity demands, and democratic communication have all been found by either school climate research or other school socialization literature to contribute positively to the development of psychosocial competence in students. Having now discussed a set of variables related to student competence, it is now necessary to delineate findings from studies that examine effective socialization within the family. A review of these findings will demonstrate that many of the variables found to be important in school socialization literature have also been shown to be important in literature that deals with the socialization of children in families.

Socialization in Families

An examination of the preceding review of school socialization research should reveal to the reader that positive school climates and student competency exist in environments that encompass variables that provide both resources and restrictions. The aspects of school climate that are related to student competency echoes descriptions of aspects of parenting that have been outlined in parenting style literature. Numerous studies have found that competence in children is related to parenting practices that both restrict and provide resources to children (Baumrind, 1967, 1971, 1991; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Weiss &

Schwarz, 1996). In fact some research has already been done that links school climate research with parenting style literature.

Pellerin (2005, 2005) found that the effects of school socialization replicated the effects of family socialization. In other words, high levels of student competency were significantly related to the child's attendance in a school that he/she perceived as having an authoritative climate. Similar results were found in a study completed by Hetherington (1993). Both Hetherington (1993) and Pellerin (2005, 2005) utilized archived data in their studies. Both researchers chose a limited number of items from archived surveys that they felt would fall under the dimensions of warmth and control. Pellerin, for example, sampled four items to determine if students perceived their school environment as warm and sampled two items to determine if students perceived their school environment as controlling. The results of Pellerin's study, while important for establishing the potential utility of Baumrind's model within school settings, does not provide school administrators with detailed information. More information might be obtained by a measure that had been designed to measure Baumrind's two dimensions of parenting styles and each of its six subscales. Given that a link exists between school climate research and parenting styles research, it now becomes germane to move into a description of the model of parenting styles that has been so consistently linked with higher levels of competency in children.

A well validated model of child socialization is Baumrind's (Baumrind, 1967, 1971, 1991; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996) two-dimensional model of effective parenting. In this model parenting practices are measured for both the amount of warmth and the

amount of control that is present. The measurement of warmth includes parents' careful protection of their child's physical and emotional safety, the provision of resources, and expressions of affection and praise. The measurement of control involves examining the consistent enforcement of rules, the use of maturity demands, and the level of democratic communication between parents and children.

After measuring the dimensions of control and warmth parents are determined to fall into one of four potential categories. These categories are: authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful, and permissive. Parents who are perceived as having high levels of both control and warmth are categorized as authoritative parents. Parents who score high on the dimension of control and low on the dimension of warmth are categorized as authoritarian. Those parents who demonstrate high levels of warmth and low levels of control are described as permissive parents. Neglectful parents are those parents who have low levels of both control and warmth when interacting with their children. Baumrind's model of parental socialization is illustrated below in Figure 2. It is widely agreed that authoritative parenting plays a central role in the development of desirable social, cognitive, and academic outcomes for children (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996).

While past studies (Hetherington, 1993; Pellerin, 2005, 2005) have established meaningful similarities between models of effective socialization in family and school settings there still remains a lack of quantitative measures that characterize a school's perceived climate according to Baumrind's parenting styles classifications. The current study addressed the lack of a quantitative measure of school climate based on Baumrind's classification system by designing an original measure. A description of the ways in

which the allocation of roles and responsibilities within schools has been shown to be related to school climate and student competency follows.

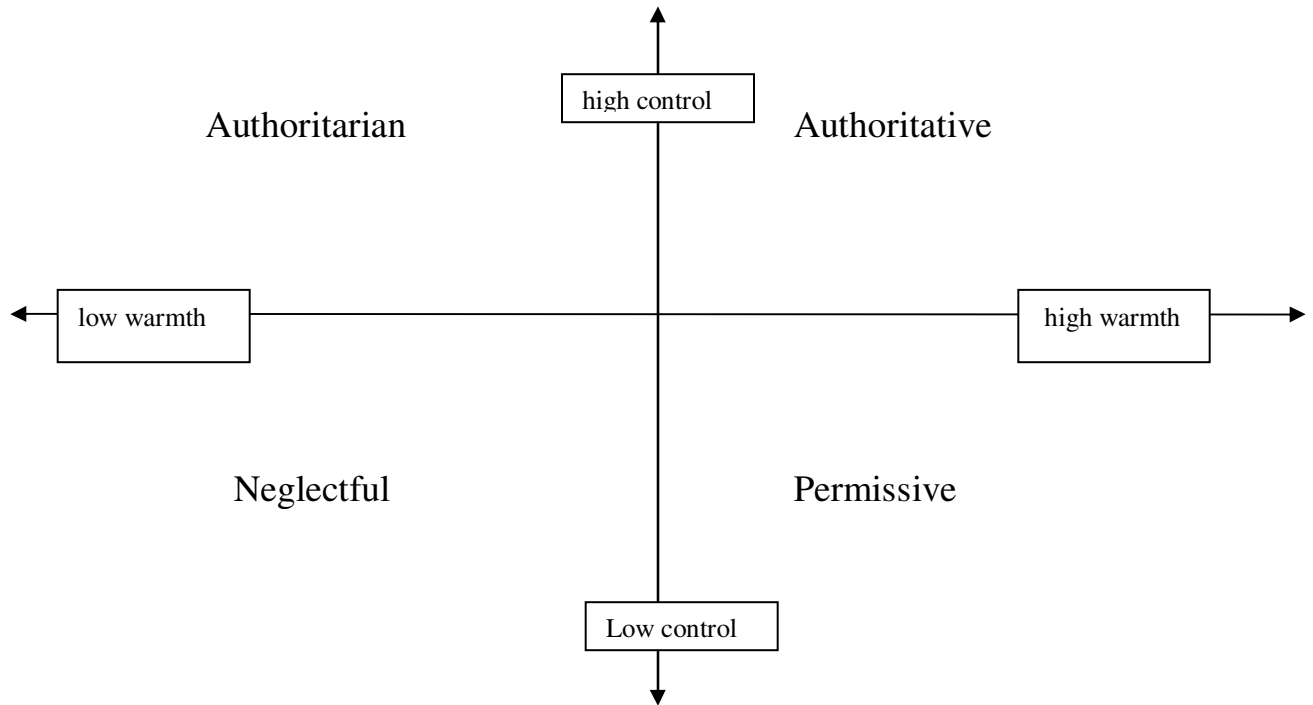


Figure 2. Baumrind's parenting styles classifications.

Student Roles and Responsibilities

Currently there is limited research on how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities are related to positive school climates (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008). Multiple findings from school socialization literature do, however, shed some light on how the allocation of roles and responsibilities within schools may be related to student competency. Specifically, findings from research on democratic schooling (Gray & Channoff, 1986; Gray & Feldman, 2004; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939), research on school-wide factors that influence school engagement (Newmann, 1981), and research on

the effects of student leadership (Holdsworth, 2004; McGregor, 2007; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Worrall et al., 2006) all point to the idea that increased student may be related to higher levels of student competency. Research findings from each of these areas will now be briefly outlined.

Democratic schools are schools in which roles and responsibilities are allocated based on an organizational model in which the power and responsibility to determine system restrictions is distributed equally among all members of the school community. What this means is that all teachers and students participate in community meetings in which school policies, practices, and curriculum are determined based on a majority vote. Each student and staff member is entitled to one vote. All votes are of equal value. Some democratic schools follow the Summerhill model which was developed in England in the 1930s. Other democratic schools follow the Sudbury Valley model which was developed in the United States in the late 1960s. In schools based on the Summerhill model students vote on matters of school rules and the resolution of disputes. In democratic schools based on the Sudbury Valley model students vote on a much wider variety of issues including the school budget, curriculum, and hiring and firing of staff.

The democratic school movement is generally credited as having been begun in England by A. S. Neill. Neill based the development of democratic schooling on the work of educator Homer Lane and psychoanalyst Willem Reich (Neill, 1991). Neil, Lane, and Reich each held that if the developing child was given more control over his environment then this child would be better able to internalize system needs for restriction and better psychological and social outcomes would result. Neill created an environment in which greater control could be given to children by allowing all children to participate in student

government and by avoiding coercive practices whenever possible. Neill also eliminated age segregation so both younger and older children could benefit from participating in mentoring and apprenticing one another. Some limited research on democratic schooling has lent support to the idea that increasing student responsibility for determining system rules, maturity demands, and forms of communication may be related to student competence (Gray & Channoff, 1986; Gray & Feldman, 2004; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939).

A review related to both school engagement and student leadership uncovered additional support for the idea that increased student involvement in determining school rules, maturity demands, and forms of communication may be related to levels of student competence. For example, in a review of school engagement literature Newmann (1981) found that student participation in school policy and management and increased voluntary choice were related to increased student engagement. Findings related to the effects of student leadership in schools have demonstrated that increasing the ability of students to participate in determining system restrictions may be related to increased progress in learning (Holdsworth, 2004; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Worrall, Noden & Desforges, 2006).

A study by McGregor (2007) sought to describe current projects in which students were given greater voice in determining restrictions operating within schools. McGregor studied several projects that were underway within and between schools. In some of the projects reviewed by this study students participated in efforts to modify curriculum. In other projects students acted as teachers and coaches or led research. Findings from McGregor's study showed student participation to be a significant contributor to

developing learning communities and linked student involvement to increases in both staff and student motivation. Increased student responsibility was also shown to affect both teachers' and students' understanding of learning. The author also observed that the increased participation of youth in determining school restrictions lead to a shift in the school climate and culture.

The current study attempted to further elucidate the link between student roles and responsibilities and school climate by including measurements of both school climate and student roles and responsibilities. The relationships between student roles and responsibilities, school climate, and student competency have now been described. The limitations of school climate research that were addressed by the current study appear in the following section of this paper. The description of these limitations is followed by a list of research questions.

School Climate Research

Though school climate research has improved over the years, a review of recent literature (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008; Way, Reddy, Rhodes, 2007) has revealed that some problems still remain. Any useful study in the field of school climate must demonstrate an awareness of and willingness to attempt to resolve these limitations. A description of three problems that currently exist within school climate research and an explanation of the ways that each of these problems was addressed in the design of the current study follows.

First, little research has been completed that focuses exclusively on how the organizational properties of school climate are related to student competency (Wentzel &

Looney, 2007). In order to overcome this limitation and improve upon past research, the current study focused exclusively on organizational school climate. This focus on organizational school climate was enhanced by carefully wording survey questions so that they asked exclusively about the patterns or rules that operate at a school-wide level. Other school climate surveys often ask not only about organizational school climate but also include questions about the school's ecology, milieu, and culture. Another problem present in school climate research is the failure of school climate researchers to develop a quantitative measure that utilizes a comprehensive model of socialization (Grusec & Hastings, 2007). While some school climate researchers (Hetherington, 1993; Pellerin, 2005, 2005) have investigated school climate using Baumrind's comprehensive two-dimensional model, no one has yet to design a measure that is based on this model. The development of such a measure could lead to more useful results from school climate surveys and the ability to better understand the relationship between perceived school climate and students' psychosocial and academic competence.

Third, research on how roles and responsibilities are related to perceived school climate (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008) is currently lacking. This scarcity of information on roles and responsibilities makes it difficult for school administrators to know exactly what to implement in order to improve a school's climate. The lack of information regarding student roles and responsibilities was addressed in the current study by querying students about how school roles and responsibilities are allocated and then investigating how the students' perceived allocation of school roles and responsibilities might be related to students' perception of school climate.

To summarize, the utility of school climate research is hindered by three pressing problems: a lack of research that focuses on organizational school climate, the lack of a quantitative measure that utilizes a comprehensive model of socialization, and a lack of understanding regarding how school roles and responsibilities might be related to the students' perception of school climate. The current study was designed in such a way as to attempt to address these three limitations. Information on each of these limitations and its corresponding solution can be found below in Table 1.

Table 1

School Climate Research: Problems and Solutions

Problem	Solution
Little research has been completed that focuses exclusively on how the organizational properties of schools affect student outcomes (Wentzel & Looney, 2007)	Focus exclusively on organizational school climate
Lack of a measure that uses a comprehensive model of school socialization (Hetherington, 1993; Pellerin, 2005, 2005)	Create a new measure based on Baumrind' parenting styles classifications
Research on the relationship between school roles and responsibilities and students' perception of school climate is lacking (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008)	Query participants regarding school roles and responsibilities

Research Questions

The literature review has identified several areas that are likely to relate to students' perception of school climate and student competency. The validation of a comprehensive model of aspects of school climate that are correlated with student

competency, as well as a reliable survey that measures this model, could guide school policy-makers and administrators in improving students' perception of school climate and support the development of student competency. The current study attempted to answer the following questions regarding students' perception of organizational school climate and adolescent competency:

- 1) How are students' perceptions of an authoritative school climate related to student competency?
- 2) How are school roles and responsibilities allocated?
- 3) How are students' perception of the allocation of student roles and responsibilities related to students' perception of an authoritative school climate?

Chapter III –Methodology

It has been argued that previous research in the field of school climate is limited by three problems. Namely, a lack of focus on the organizational properties of schools (Wentzel & Looney, 2007), the failure to create a quantitative measure that is based on a comprehensive model of socialization (Grusec & Hastings, 2007; Hetherington, 1993; Pellerin, 2005, 2005), and a lack of research on how students' perception of the allocation of roles and responsibilities is related to school climate (Benner, Graham, & Mistry, 2008). The design of the current study attempted to ameliorate three of these limitations. As outlined in the second chapter, the current study aimed to answer the following questions: How are students' perceptions of an authoritative school climate related to student competency? How are school roles and responsibilities allocated? How are students' perceptions of the allocation of school roles and responsibilities related to students' perception of an authoritative school climate?

In this chapter the theoretical framework, participants, procedures, and measures are outlined. A discussion of how participants were recruited and procedures for collecting data in light of ethical considerations follows. Approval from Mount Saint Vincent's University Research Ethics Board to conduct research with adolescents was received prior to proceeding with the research.

Theoretical Framework

Ecological Systems Theory

The specific theory that is needed to comprehend the current research is Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Ecological Systems Theory. According to Bronfenbrenner's paradigm, human development and interactions occur across multiple ecological levels. These levels were defined by Bronfenbrenner as: (1) Microsystem, (2) Mesosystem, (3) Exosystem, (4) Macrosystem, and (5) Chronosystem. The microsystem is the level of the environment at which the individual has the most direct contact with individuals rather than institutions. Organizations present in the microsystem might include classrooms, families, or sports teams. In contrast, the mesosystem is comprised of larger institutions that contain and affect and are affected by the Microsystems. Examples of systems operating at the mesosystem level of the environment are home and school.

The third level of the environment that Bronfenbrenner delineated was the exosystem. The exosystem is composed of those elements of the environment that determine a person's experiences but in which the person does not participate. For example, a child does not participate in his/her father's work life; however, the quality of the father's job will affect that child's experiences. Bronfenbrenner went on to describe the macrosystem. This system includes pervasive attitudes and beliefs that affect the

culture in which a person lives. A child growing up in a macrosystem which was composed primarily of democratic values would have very different experiences from a child who was situated within a macrosystem that was characterized by totalitarian or communist ideologies. The final environmental domain that Bronfenbrenner discussed is the chronosystem. The chronosystem differs from the other four levels of the environment in that it is not composed of material or ideological entities. Instead, the chronosystem is composed of those events that occur across time and affect the quality of an individual's life. Events operating across time and within the chronosystem might affect any of the four other levels of the environment. Some events or conditions that operate within the chronosystem might be war, recession, or much more personal events such as having one's parents divorce. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system paradigm is illustrated below in Figure 3.

Bronfenbrenner held that all phenomena should be examined at every level of the ecological system (2005). The processes by which schools socialize children operate simultaneously across several levels of the environment. With ecological systems theory functioning as a framework, the current study attempted to examine schools at the level of the mesosystem. The analysis of the mesosystem level of the school environment is most consistently pursued in the field of school climate research. As such, the current study created and utilized an instrument meant to examine and classify the construct of school climate.

Participants

The population surveyed in this study was older adolescents males and females. The population was primarily Caucasians who attended a large high school (approximately 1000 students) and resided in a rural area.

One hundred letters of invitation and parental/guardian consent were distributed to students. Of the 100 documents, 20 signed consent forms were returned to the researcher. All 20 of the students who returned signed consent forms completed the questionnaires in their entirety. The 20 students who participated came from Global Studies classes taught by the same teacher. Five students came from one Global Studies class and 15 came from another. Thirteen of the participants were female and seven were male.

Measures

Perceived Organizational School Climate (Student Report)

The measures to be used in this study were created and selected based on previous findings that indicate that the variables indexed by these surveys are related to both authoritative socialization practices by parents and school climate. A questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed by the researcher to explore adolescents' perceptions of

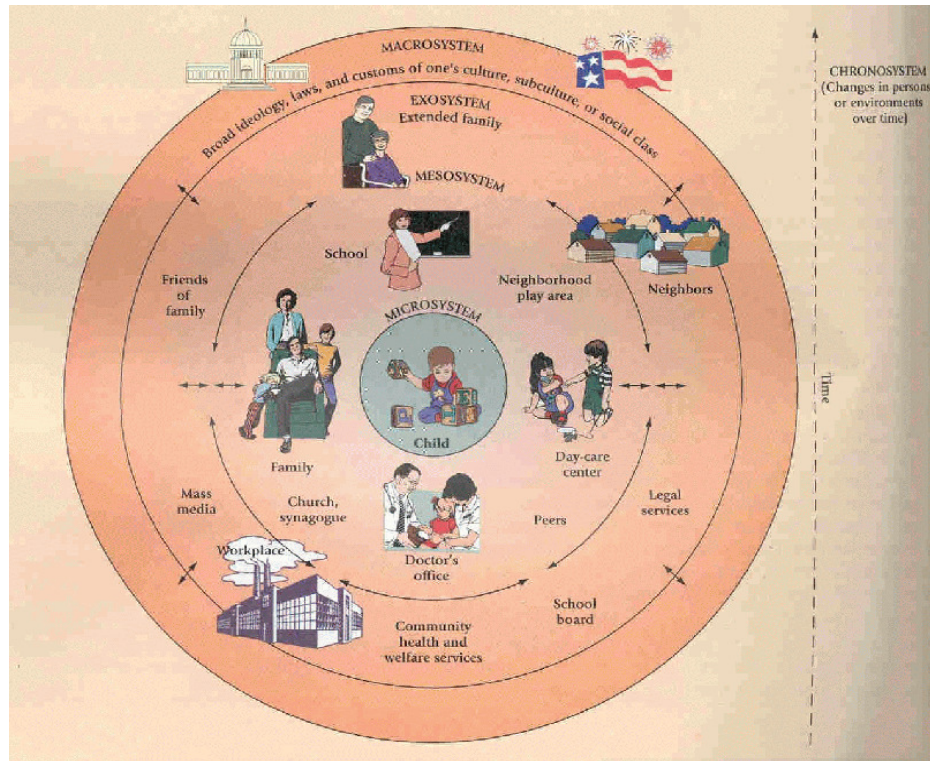


Figure 3. Model of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Anonymous, 2009)

their organizational school climate. Based on existing literature and for the purposes of this study, organizational school climate is defined as patterns or rules that operate at a school-wide level. These organizational components would, for example, include the ways in which members of the school community are grouped, the ways in which resources are allocated to students, the ways in which decisions are made within the school, and how students are either disciplined or rewarded within school.

The questionnaire is entitled Perceived Organizational School Climate Survey (Student Report) (POSC). The POSC consists of 30 items: 12 items measure warmth (e.g., "When I don't know how to do my school work I can get help at school"), 11 items

measure control (e.g., “At my school I am pushed to think independently”), and 7 items explore the roles and responsibilities that may underlie the perception of an authoritative school climate (e.g., “The thing in my school that helps the most when I have a personal problem is:”). A Total Perceived School Climate score is yielded by summing the Warmth and Control items. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 *Strongly Disagree* to 5 *Strongly Agree*. The POSC was found to have acceptable psychometric properties in the present study with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient levels of .84, .82, and .69 for Total Perceived School Climate, Warmth, and Control, respectively (see Appendix A).

School roles and responsibilities that may underlie the perception of school climate were assessed with seven questions (e.g., “Who has the most say in making the rules that you follow at school?”). Each of these seven questions present a range of options for the student to choose from. This part of the POSC is a nominal type scale. Students may respond by choosing one of six categories. These categories are: self, peers, teacher, staff, parent/guardian, and community organization. The final question did not allow students to indicate self as the person who was most responsible for having democratic communication happen at school (What is the main way that students participate in the running of your school?). For this final question students had only five categories to choose from.

Prosocial Behaviour

Three questionnaires were used to measure the dependent variable of psychosocial competency. Prosocial behaviour was indexed using the Social Goals Scale (Wentzel, 1999). This is a 14-item measure that defines social goals as what students see

themselves as trying to accomplish. This scale asks students how often they try to achieve prosocial and responsible outcomes. Responses are made on 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). This scale was found to have acceptable psychometric properties in the present study with Cronbach's alpha coefficient levels of .71. This survey can be found in Appendix B of this document.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was indexed by the general self-esteem subscale of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Students responded to items using a 4-point Likert-type scale with lower ratings indicating lower levels of self-esteem (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 4 = *Strongly Agree*). This scale was found to have acceptable psychometric properties in the present study with Cronbach's alpha coefficient levels of .81. This survey can be found in Appendix C of this document.

Perceived Academic Engagement

Levels of school engagement were tabulated using a measure of perceived academic engagement that was written by Jun-Li Chen (2005). Students responded to items using a 5-point Likert-type scale with higher ratings indicating higher levels of academic engagement (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). This scale was found to have acceptable psychometric properties in the present study with Cronbach's alpha coefficient levels of .77. This survey can be found in Appendix D of this document.

Procedure

School board level approval was sought from the Superintendent of the Annapolis Valley School board (Appendix E). Once the school board had approved the study,

principals from various schools were contacted to discuss the study. Principals were emailed an information letter detailing the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix F). Each principal was asked for permission to approach teachers and invite them to participate by distributing questionnaires to high school students. Participating teachers were emailed an information letter detailing the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix G). Participating teachers distributed parental letters of invitation and consent to parents/guardians and students.

The packages for parents/guardians contained an information letter (Appendix H) and a letter of consent (Appendix I). The packages for students contained an information letter (Appendix J), questionnaires (Appendix A, B, C, & D), a student consent form (Appendix K), and a list of resources for students requiring protection and/support (Appendix L). The information letter explained the nature and purpose of the study to students and invited them to participate in the study. The letter also outlined the precautions that were to be taken during and after data collection to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. This letter was read aloud to students by the researcher.

Chapter IV –Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present and summarize the findings from the questionnaires used in the current study. First, demographic information will be reviewed. Second, findings related to the Likert-type scaled responses that queried students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate will be summarized. Last, findings related to the nominal scale that investigated the school roles and responsibilities that may underlie the perception of an authoritative school climate will be outlined.

Demographics

The first two items on the questionnaires requested demographic information from the participants. Thirteen (65%) of the questionnaires were completed by females and 7 (35%) were completed by males. Surveys were completed in June of 2009. At that time, five (25%) of students indicated that they had been born in 1991, 11 (55%) of students indicated that they had been born in 1992, and four (20%) of students indicated that they had been born in 1993. Demographic data is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.

Demographic Information on Participants

Demographics	Response Format	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	7	35%
	Female	13	65%
Year of Birth	1991	5	25%
	1992	11	55%
	1993	4	20%

Students' Perception of an Authoritative Organizational School Climate

Preliminary Correlational Analyses

Preliminary analyses revealed that assumptions were adequately met for linearity, homogeneity, and normality. No sex differences were found for any variables in the present study. As such, all analyses included males and females.

A series of Spearman's rank correlations were conducted between all variables that were measured using Likert-typed scaled responses. Spearman's rank correlations were used because of the small sample size utilized in this study. These correlations were conducted in order to better understand how students' perceptions of an authoritative school climate are related to student competency.

When examining the correlations between students' perception of organizational school climate, self-esteem, school engagement, and social goal seeking it was found that students' perception of organizational school climate was significantly and positively correlated with their self-esteem, $\rho = .61, p < .01$ and school engagement, $\rho = .48, p < .05$. However, students' perception of organizational school climate was not correlated with social goal seeking, $\rho = .25, ns$. These results are summarized in Table 3.

School Roles and Responsibilities that May Underlie the Perception of an Authoritative Organizational School Climate

School roles and responsibilities that may underlie students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate were assessed using seven questions. Each of these questions asked students to choose the one group that was most responsible for each of the seven school roles and responsibilities that may be at work in an authoritative school climate. The groups that the students could choose from were: self, peers, teacher, other school staff, parents/guardian, members of a community group. The seventh question did not allow students to indicate self as the person who was most responsible

Table 3.

Correlations between Students' Perceptions of Organizational School Climate, Self-Esteem, School Engagement, and Social Goal Seeking

Climate	Students' Perceptions of Organizational School
Self-Esteem	.61**
School Engagement	.48*
Social Goal Seeking	.25

*p<.05

**p<.01

for determining democratic communication happening at school (What is the main way that students participate in the running of your school?). For this final question students had only five categories to choose from. The seven questions asked who was most responsible for: protection at school, provision of academic help at school, provision of personal help at school, provision of praise, determining consistent rules at school, determining maturity demands at school, and participating in democratic communication at school. The frequencies of each response for each of these seven questions are presented in tables four (below). Table 5 (below) presents the total frequencies and percentages for all questions.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics for all Questions Related to School Roles and Responsibilities

Role/Responsibility	Frequency Each Stakeholder was Indicated					
	Self	Peers	Teachers	Other Staff	Parents	Community
Protection	6	12	0	0	2	0
Academic Provision	3	8	9	0	0	0
Emotional Provision	6	12	0	0	2	0
Praise	1	6	2	1	10	0
Consistent Rules	2	0	1	2	0	15
Maturity Demands	11	0	0	0	1	8
Democratic Communication	n/a	20	0	0	0	0

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics for all Questions Related to School Roles and Responsibilities

Role/Responsibility	Frequency	Percentage
Total		
Self	29	20.7%
Peers	58	41.4%
Teachers	12	8.6%
Other Staff	3	2.1%
Parents/Guardians	15	10.7%
Community Group	23	16.4%

Differences between Means

A number of independent sample t-tests were run in order to see if students' differing perception of the allocation of school roles and responsibilities are related to the perception of an authoritative school climate. Due to a lack of variance in student responses t-tests could not be performed on questions 28, and 30.

An independent sample t-test was performed on the results from question 24 and the POSC. Question 24 asked students who they perceived as most responsible for doing things that protected the student in school. No significant results were found.

Next, an independent sample t-test was performed on the results from question 25 and the POSC. Question 25 assessed students' perception of school roles and responsibilities for providing academic support. It was found that students who said that the thing that helped them the most with learning was "figuring out the problem myself," scored significantly higher on measures of students' perception of school climate ($t = 2.71, p < .05$) than did students who said that the thing that helped them the most was getting help from teachers.

An independent sample t-test was performed on the results from question 26 and the POSC. Question 26 asked about students' perception of who was most responsible for helping the students with personal problems. No significant results were found.

A final independent sample t-test was performed on the results of question 27 and the POSC. This question assessed students' perception of who was most responsible for praising students. A result approaching significance was found on ratings of perceptions of organizational school climate between students who indicated that their main source of praise came from peers vs. students who indicated that their main source of praise came

from parents/guardians, ($t = 2.14, p = .05$). Examination of the data showed that students who indicated that their main source of praise came from peers perceived their organizational school climate as more authoritative than did students who indicated that their main source of praise came from parents/guardians.

An independent sample t-test was performed on the results from question 29 and the POSC. Question 29 asked about students' perception of who was most responsible for determining whether or not the student worked hard at school. No significant differences were found between the mean scores of students who responded differently to this question.

Chapter V-Discussion

Implications

The purpose of the present study was two-fold. The first goal of the study was to examine the relationship between students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate and adolescent psychosocial competency. In order to do this a questionnaire was created that measured organizational school climate along the dimensions of warmth and control. The dimension of warmth included: physical and emotional protection at school, academic provision, personal provision, and praise. The dimension of control included: the existence of consistent rules, the presence of high maturity demands, and the presence of democratic communication. The choice of these two dimensions and each of their elements was based upon findings from parental socialization research (Baumrind, 1967). High scores on the measure of perceived organizational school climate would indicate that students perceived their school environment as more authoritative than did students who had a low score. Results from

this questionnaire were correlated with reported student levels of self-esteem, school engagement, and social goal seeking.

Results of correlational analyses were in the expected direction for all variables. Consistent with the hypothesis, students' perception of an organizational school climate that was authoritative was found to be positively correlated with both self-esteem and school engagement. However, students' perception of organizational school climate was not found to be significantly correlated with social goal seeking.

The strong positive correlations between students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate and aspects of adolescent competency may mean that the two dimensions of warmth and control form a comprehensive model of school socialization. In the past, a comprehensive model of school socialization has been lacking (Grusec & Hastings, 2007) as has a measure to assess it (Hetherington, 1993). Continued research related to a measure that indexes students' perceptions of each of the components of an authoritative school may also aid policy-makers and administrators in identifying and targeting areas of strength and weakness in various schools.

The second goal of the present study was to better understand both how students' perceive school roles and responsibilities to be allocated and the relationship of this perceived allocation to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate. Students' perception of school roles and responsibilities were assessed using seven questions. Findings from these seven questions showed that 62.1% of the school responsibilities related to the perception of an authoritative organizational school climate were perceived to be primarily taken on by either themselves personally or by their peers.

This suggests that policy-makers and administrators might consider the powerful role that students play, either actively or passively, in creating the prevailing school climate. It may also be the case that students, if mentored properly, might act as an enormous resource within the educational system. With proper mentoring students might begin to act as integral resources for providing protection and support to their peers and for providing dissenting opinions to the administration.

The first question that investigated how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate directed students to choose the group of people in their school that does the most to protect him/her. Ninety percent of students indicated that the person in their school who helped the most to protect him/her was either himself/herself or peers. Since the level of student involvement in providing protection for students is high, school administrators might consider training students in methods of conflict resolution. School administrators might also consider making students more aware of the role that other education stakeholders might play in protecting students and resolving conflicts.

The second question that investigated how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate directed students to choose the group of people in their school that helped the most when he/she needed help learning. It was also found that students who said that the thing that helped them the most with learning was "figuring out the problem myself," scored significantly higher on measures of students' perception of organizational school climate ($t = 2.71, p < .05$) than did students who said that they would the thing that helped them the most was getting help from teachers. In light of this

finding, school policy-makers and administrators might consider increasing student responsibilities for independent academic problem solving.

Increasing students' independent academic problem solving might be accomplished in several ways. Given the importance of the existence of high maturity demands, teachers might first assess students' level of effort before offering any assistance in problem solving. For example, when a student approaches a teacher for help the teacher might first ask the student what he/she had already done to attempt to solve the problem independently. A list of possible strategies might be provided to students. Strategies might include: reading a range of relevant texts, answering comprehension questions that appear at the end of texts, applying reading comprehension strategies, completing practice exercises, diagramming the format for a written product, completing point form notes, or completing the revising and editing of a document based on peer feedback. Teacher might then lend assistance only after many preliminary attempts have been made to resolve difficulties independently.

Of course, in order for this shift in academic responsibilities to be effective students would first need to be instructed in research-based strategies for academic problem solving. In the area of language arts, this instruction in academic problem solving would likely include instruction in isolating and merging phonemes, decoding text, reading comprehension, and the construction of expository and narrative texts. In the area of mathematics, this instruction in academic problem solving would likely include instruction in basic computations and math concepts.

After students had received this instruction and mastered these basic skills, however, they might then be expected to work relatively independently through course

materials and assignments. One would hope that that majority of students in high school would have reading, writing, and computational skills adequate to allow them to engage in increasingly independent attempts to complete work. An increase in student responsibility for completing work more independently might also involve having students spend less time engaged in classroom activities and more time pursuing independent study.

The third question that investigated how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate directed students to choose the group of people in their school that helped the most when he/she had a personal problem. Sixty percent of students indicated that the people in their school who helped him/her the most with personal problems were peers. Since the level of student involvement in providing help with personal problems is high, school administrators might consider training students in basic methods of providing supportive counseling, peer advocacy, and making community agency referrals. School administrators might also consider making students more aware of the role that other education stakeholders might play in helping students with their personal problems.

The fourth question that investigated how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate directed students to choose the group of people who praised him/her most. It was found that students who indicated that the people who praised him/her most was a peer rated his/her perceived organizational school climate as more authoritative than did students who indicated that the people who praised him/her the most were parents/guardians. The differences between the mean ratings of perceived organizational

school climate was not significant but approached the level of significance with, ($t = 2.14, p = .05$). This result may mean that fostering and giving value to positive peer relationships may be an important element of creating authoritative school climates. One way of doing this may be through the explicit teaching of appropriate social skills to all members of the school community. This could be done with school-wide programming for the majority of students and group and individual interventions for those students who struggle socially.

The fifth question investigated how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities that may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate directed students to choose the group of people that has the most say in making the rules at his/her school. Seventy five percent of students indicated that the group of people who had the most say in making rules at his/her school was the school board or government. For students who perceive school rules as unfair or inconsistent it may be beneficial to delineate a process by which students can appeal to change school rules. This may involve outlining a procedure for students to follow that allows them to appeal rules up to and including the level of the school board. The creation of such a procedure might teach students how they can take an active role in creating change in their communities and how they can improve their own personal circumstances through efforts at self-advocacy. These types of lessons may be of particular benefit to those students who face social barriers related to class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability in both the school system and in society at large.

The sixth question that investigated how students' perception of school roles and responsibilities may be related to students' perception of an authoritative organizational

school climate directed students to choose the one most important reason that he/she needs to work hard and think independently at school. Fifty-five percent of students indicated that the main reason that they worked hard and thought independently at school was “because I want to learn.” Forty percent of students indicated that the primary reason that they worked hard and thought independently at school was “to get the job I want or into the school I want.” These two frequently selected responses indicate two possible pathways for increasing student motivation. For some students motivation might be increased through requiring students to pursue topics of personal interest. For other students motivation might be increased by educating them regarding the relationship between areas of study and required skills for school admission or the attainment of employment.

The seventh question that investigated how students’ perception of school roles and responsibilities may be related to students’ perception of organizational school climate investigated democratic communication in schools and directed students to choose the main way that students participate in the running of their school. One hundred percent of students indicated that the main way that students participated in the running of their school was through student government. No other avenue for democratic participation was endorsed by any students.

Increased exposure to the processes of school government may lead to students’ perceiving higher levels of democratic communication within their schools. This increased perception of democratic communication may contribute to higher levels of adolescent competency. This being the case, school policy-makers and administrators might consider maximizing the opportunities for all students to participate in school

government. For example, every student might be required to serve on a school government committee prior to graduation. Other methods of increasing student participation in school government might also be considered.

To summarize, the use of a measure that is based on a model of school socialization with two well defined dimensions, each having very specific components, may help school policy-makers and administrators to design and run schools that aid in the development of high levels of self-esteem and school engagement. Future research related to a measure that indexes students' perceptions of each of the components of an authoritative school may also aid policy-makers and administrators in identifying and targeting areas of strength and weakness in various schools.

Moreover, the information gained from the questionnaire related to school roles and responsibilities has many possible implications. Findings showed that overall 62.1% of the school responsibilities related to the perception of an authoritative organizational school climate were primarily taken on by either themselves personally or by their peers. This finding suggests that both the education system as a whole and individual students might benefit from leveraging student abilities to provide peer support and to provide administrators with the valuable insights that come from organizational dissent that is sought out, valued, and appropriately communicated through democratic processes.

Related to the allocation of warmth within an authoritative school environment, school administrators might consider training students in methods of conflict resolution, basic supportive counseling, peer advocacy, and making community agency referrals. Students may also benefit from being made more aware of the role that other school stakeholders might play in protecting them and helping them with their personal

problems. School policy makers and administrators might also consider increasing student responsibilities for independent academic problem solving and for providing positive peer evaluation.

Related to the allocation of control within an authoritative school environment, it may be beneficial for students to be educated about the reality of how all stakeholders might find opportunities to become involved in the creation of school rules. This may be particularly important for students who do not perceive school rules as fair and/or consistent. Also, students' responses regarding school roles and responsibilities indicate that it may also be helpful to increase student responsibilities for pursuing topics of personal interest and for participation in student government. Students may also benefit from increased opportunities for education related to required skills for secondary school admission or the attainment of employment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The current study presents limitations that require further examination and clarification. First, caution should be taken when attempting to generalize from the findings of this study. This study used a convenience sample. In order to generalize from the findings a study that used a larger sample size with a wider range of ages, students from various geographical areas, and diverse school settings would need to be completed.

We also need to be aware of the explanations and conclusions that can be drawn from correlational research. Correlational data does not allow for certainty regarding causality or direction of effects. For example, it is unclear from the present study if students' perceive their organizational school climate as highly authoritative because they have high self-esteem or if in fact the opposite is true. The direction of the relationship

between the perception of an authoritative school climate and levels of self-esteem and school engagement cannot be determined given the design of the current research project. The utilization of experimental or longitudinal research methods would be needed in order to establish the causality and direction of effects.

Related to measure, the use of self-report measures also presents a limitation. Questionnaires are time efficient and convenient, however, participants often respond to items in socially desirable ways (Morlan & Tan, 1998). For example, participants' actual mean self-esteem score may be lower than what was reported in the current research. The use of observational techniques or interviews may help to contrast students' perceptions of school climate, self-esteem, school engagement, and social goal seeking with actual school events or the researcher's clinical judgment of the variables of interest. Also, the use of an interval, rather than a nominal, measure to examine school roles and responsibility may allow for more variance in student responses and a clearer understanding of the relationships among variables.

Further, although students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate can be split into two subtests, each with three or four components, both subtests were examined together in the present study. If each subtest and each component of these scales were examined separately then more information about the unique contribution of each component could be attained. For example, it may be that provision of academic assistance contributes little to the positive relationships between students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate, self-esteem, and student engagement. It may also be found that the perception of consistent rules has a particularly strong relationship with school engagement.

Conducting a similar study with children at a variety of ages would add to our understanding of the relationships between the perception of an authoritative organizational school climate and student competence. Currently, no research exists that examines at what age the perception of an authoritative organizational school climate becomes significantly related to levels of self-esteem and/or school engagement.

Also, the use of a larger sample size would allow the researcher to determine if any interactions between the variables exist. For example, it may be that for students with lower reported levels of school engagement the relationship between self-esteem and the perception of organizational school climate is significant while for students with higher reported levels of school engagement the relationship between self-esteem and the perception of organizational school climate is not significant. In this way, high levels of school engagement may act as a protective factor against the detrimental effects of a school climate that is not perceived as authoritative. Conversely, it may be that there is an interaction between self-esteem and the perception of school climate and that a high level of self-esteem acts as a buffer against any negative effects associated with a school climate that is perceived as lacking in either warmth and/or control. The use of a larger sample size might also allow for the completion of a factor analysis that would either confirm or refute the idea that students' perception of organization school climate corresponds with a two-dimensional model.

Conclusion

In summary, the current research was designed to examine the relationships among students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate, adolescent psychosocial competency, and school roles and responsibilities. Correlational analyses

showed significant positive relationships between the students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate, self-esteem, and school engagement. However, a significant positive relationship was not found between students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate and social goal seeking. Related to school roles and responsibilities, findings showed that overall 62.1% of the school responsibilities related to the perception of an authoritative organizational school climate were primarily taken on by either themselves personally or by their peers. Also related to school roles and responsibilities, a significant difference between the mean score of students' perception of an authoritative organizational school climate was found for students who said that the thing that helped them the most with learning was "figuring out the problem myself," compared to students who said that the one thing that helped them the most with learning was getting help from teachers. It was also found that students who indicated that the people who praised him/her most was a peer rated his/her perceived organizational school climate as more authoritative than did students who indicated that the people who praised him/her the most were parents/guardians. The differences between the mean ratings of perceived organizational school climate was not significant but approached the level of significance.

The results of this study have many possible implications for school design and administration. This study included the creation of a measure of students' perception of organizational school climate that utilized a two-dimensional model. These two dimensions are warmth and control. The use of this measure may help school policy makers and administrators in identifying and targeting areas of strength and weakness in various schools. Results from this study indicate that students themselves play an

important role in determining the overall environmental quality of a school. In light of this, policy-makers and administrators might consider taking advantage of this capacity and assisting students in forming positive peer relationships and effectively communicating organizational dissent.

The results of this study have many possible implications for school design and administration. This study included the creation of a measure of the perception of organizational school climate that utilized a two-dimensional model. These two dimensions are warmth and control. The use of this measure may help school policy makers and administrators in identifying and targeting areas of strength and weakness in various schools. Results from this study also suggest that educating students in the following areas may increase levels of student competence. These areas are: methods of conflict resolution, basic supportive counseling, peer advocacy, agency referrals, processes by which various education stakeholders can be involved in the creation of school rules, and required skills for secondary school admission or the attainment of employment. Students may also benefit from being made more aware of the role that other school stakeholders might play in protecting them and helping them with their personal problems. Student competence may also be nurtured by increasing adolescent responsibility for independent academic problem solving, providing positive peer evaluation, pursuing topics of personal interest, and participating in school government. Future research is needed to continue to understand the relationships among students' perception of authoritative school climate, student competency, and school roles and responsibilities.

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Chapter VI- Appendices
Appendix A – Perceived Organizational School Climate Questionnaire
(Student Report)

Date of birth: _____

Sex: Male Female

THINK ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE IN YOUR SCHOOL.

Please use the following scale and circle the number you feel best applies.

	1	2	3	4	5			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree			
				Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel safe from physical harm in my school.	1	2	3	4	5			
2. To succeed at my school I have to be able to think for myself.	1	2	3	4	5			
3. People at school tell me when I've done a good job.	1	2	3	4	5			
4. No one at my school would hurt my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5			
5. If I was physically hurt by someone I could get help at school.	1	2	3	4	5			
6. When I don't know how to do my school work I can get help at school.	1	2	3	4	5			
7. At my school it is important to keep trying my best in whatever I do.	1	2	3	4	5			
8. I feel safe from emotional harm in my school.	1	2	3	4	5			
9. When I try hard in school I receive praise from people at school.	1	2	3	4	5			

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10. In my school students participate in making decisions about what to learn or how to do things in school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. People at my school say nice things to me when I am working hard.	1	2	3	4	5
12. At my school I know the rules.	1	2	3	4	5
13. No one at my school would ever hurt me by hitting me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. If I need help learning I can get help at school.	1	2	3	4	5
15. At my school the rules are fair.	1	2	3	4	5
16. At my school I am pushed to think independently.	1	2	3	4	5
17. If I don't work hard at school I won't do well.	1	2	3	4	5
18. In order for my school to run well it is important for students to give an opinion or vote about decisions made in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I need to put in a lot of effort to do well at my school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. If I need help with a personal problem I can get help at school.	1	2	3	4	5
21. In my school students' opinions really count.	1	2	3	4	5
22. If I was emotionally hurt by someone I could get help at school.	1	2	3	4	5
23. At my school the rules make sense.	1	2	3	4	5

24. The thing in my school that helps the most to protect me is:
(choose one answer)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| something I do myself | help from other school staff |
| help from other students | help from my parents/guardians |
| help from teachers | help from a community group or a volunteer |

25. The thing in my school that helps the most when I need help learning is:
(choose one answer)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| figuring out the problem myself | help from other school staff |
| help from other students | help from my parents/guardians |
| help from teachers | help from a community group or a volunteer |

26. The thing in my school that helps the most when I have a personal problem is:
(choose one answer)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| figuring out the problem myself | help from other school staff |
| help from other students | help from my parents/guardians |
| help from teachers | help from a community group or a volunteer |

27. Who praises you the most? (choose one answer)

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| I praise myself | other school staff |
| other students | my parents/guardians |
| teachers | help from a community group or a volunteer |

28. Who has the most say in making the rules that you follow at school?
(choose one answer)

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| I do | other school staff |
| other students | parents/guardians |
| the teachers | the school board or government |

29. The one most important reason that I need to work hard and think independently at school is: (choose one answer)

- | | |
|--|---|
| because I want to learn | other school staff expects me to |
| to help or keep up with other students | my parents expect me to |
| my teachers expect me to | to get the job I want or into the school I want |

30. What is the main way that students participate in the running of your school?
(choose one answer)

- through student government
- by telling teachers what students want or need
- by telling other school staff what students want or need
- by telling our parents or guardians what students want or need
- by telling the school board or other community group what students want or need

Appendix B

Social Goals Scale

Please use the following scale and circle the number you feel best applies.

	1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always			
				Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. How often do you try to share what you've learned with your classmates?	1	2	3	4	5			
2. How often do you try to help your classmates solve a problem once you've figured it out?	1	2	3	4	5			
3. How often do you try to do what your teacher asks you to?	1	2	3	4	5			
4. How often do you try to be quiet when others are trying to study?	1	2	3	4	5			
5. How often do you try to keep working even when you're tired?	1	2	3	4	5			
6. How often do you try to keep working even when other kids are goofing off?	1	2	3	4	5			
7. How often do you try to be nice to kids when something bad has happened to them?	1	2	3	4	5			
8. How often do you try to help other kids when they have a problem?	1	2	3	4	5			
9. How often do you try to cheer someone up when something has gone wrong?	1	2	3	4	5			
10. How often do you try to think about how your behavior will affect other kids?	1	2	3	4	5			

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
11. How often do you try to keep promises that you've made to other kids?	1	2	3	4	5
12. How often do you try to keep secrets that other kids have told you?	1	2	3	4	5
13. How often do you do the things you've told other kids you would do?	1	2	3	4	5
14. How often do you try to help your classmates learn new things?	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C
General Self-Esteem Questionnaire

Please use the following scale and circle the number you feel best applies.

	1	2	3	4
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
				Strongly Disagree
				Disagree
				Agree
				Strongly Agree
1. On the whole I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
2. At times I think that I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6. I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least the equal of others.	1	2	3	4
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4

Appendix D
Perceived Academic Engagement

Please use the following scale and circle the number you feel best applies.

	1	2	3	4	5			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree			
				Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I enjoy going to school because I want to learn.	1	2	3	4	5			
2. I go to school every day.	1	2	3	4	5			
3. I go to school on time every day.	1	2	3	4	5			
4. I violate school rules.	1	2	3	4	5			
5. I distract other students from paying attention in class.	1	2	3	4	5			
6. I don't pay attention in class.	1	2	3	4	5			
7. I take careful notes in class.	1	2	3	4	5			
8. When teachers assign students work to do in class, I work hard to complete it well.	1	2	3	4	5			
9. I always submit homework on time.	1	2	3	4	5			
10. I work hard to complete homework.	1	2	3	4	5			
11. I often find extra schoolwork to do.	1	2	3	4	5			
12. I study hard for all my examinations.	1	2	3	4	5			
13. I don't pay serious attention to my schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5			
14. I don't care whether I do well in school or not.	1	2	3	4	5			

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15. If I do well on a test, I am encouraged to continue to study hard.	1	2	3	4	5
16. If I don't understand schoolwork, I find ways to understand it.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I put full effort into schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I find ways to motivate myself to study.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I help other students with their homework.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I finish schoolwork before I play.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I spend most of my time doing homework and studying.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I set high expectations for myself to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I have high expectations that I will get into college.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Overall, I consider myself a good student.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E



Director of Programs and Student Services
Regional School Board

Letter of Invitation and Information

Date

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Faith Benvenuti. I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6 completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study. The title of the study is Examining Relationships among Organizational School Climate, Student Competency, and Student Roles and Responsibilities. This study is being conducted under the supervision of MSVU faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. My research has been approved by the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University.

This research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit the participant.

I am requesting permission to survey a sample of 100 students between the ages of 12 and 18 in local high schools. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Surveys will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. With your approval, I will contact principals to ask for their permission to allow research to be done in their school. Principals will be asked to identify teachers who are willing to participate. A letter will be sent out to

teachers to request that they distribute letters of information and consent to parents/guardians of students. Parents/guardians who struggle to read printed text can choose not to participate or contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

I will request permission to visit each participating classroom to administer the questionnaires. A letter of consent will be read aloud to all participating students to ensure that students are able to give informed consent. For those students who have difficulty decoding written text I will be available to read the surveys aloud to them. Written consent will be obtained from each participating adolescent. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that a student reports that he/she is at risk of physical or emotional harm then the researcher is obligated to contact either the students' parents or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that student receives appropriate protection and care.

The original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

Participation is voluntary and students may withdraw from the study at any time or decline to answer any questions if they so desire. Participation is not related to any part of academic requirements and there will be no negative consequences for choosing not to participate or for withdrawing from the study at any time. Data resulting from the study may appear in publications.

Participants may contact the researcher to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you can reach me at ([REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457- 6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If you need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys please contact me at ([REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail).

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Faith Benvenuti
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix F



Letter of Invitation and Information

Date

Dear Principal:

My name is Faith Benvenuti. I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6 completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study. The title of the study is Examining Relationships among Organizational School Climate, Student Competency, and Student Roles and Responsibilities. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university a MSVU faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. My research has been approved by the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. This study has been approved by The Annapolis Valley School Board Superintendent.

This research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit the participant.

I am requesting permission to survey a sample of 100 students between the ages of 12 and 18 in your high school. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Surveys will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. With your approval, I will contact teachers to ask them to distribute letters of information and consent to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians who struggle to read printed text can choose not to participate or contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

I will request the teachers' permission to visit each participating classroom to administer the questionnaires. A letter of consent will be read aloud to all participating students to ensure that students are able to give informed consent. For those students who have difficulty decoding written text I will be available to read the surveys aloud to them. Written consent will be obtained from each participating adolescent. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that a student reports that he/she is at risk of physical or emotional harm then the researcher is obligated to contact either the students' parents or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that student receives appropriate protection and care.

The original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

Participants may contact the researchers to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you can reach me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457- 6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If you need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys please contact me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail).

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Faith Benvenuti

Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix G



Letter of Invitation and Information

Date

Dear Teacher:

My name is Faith Benvenuti. I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6 completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study. The title of the study is Examining Relationships among Organizational School Climate, Student Competency, and Student Roles and Responsibilities. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university a MSVU faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. My research has been approved by the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. This study has been approved by The Annapolis Valley School Board Superintendent and your school principal.

This research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit the participant.

I am requesting permission to survey a sample of students between the ages of 12 and 18 in your classroom. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Surveys will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. I am requesting that you distribute letters of information and consent to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians who struggle to read printed text can choose not to participate or contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

I am also requesting your permission to visit your classroom to administer the questionnaires. I will read a letter of consent aloud to all participating students to ensure that students are able to give informed consent. For those students who have difficulty decoding written text I will be available to read the surveys aloud to them. I will obtain written consent from each participating adolescent. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that a student reports that he/she is at risk of physical or emotional harm then the researcher is obligated to contact either the students' parents or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that student receives appropriate protection and care.

The original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

Participants may contact the researchers to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can reach me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457- 6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If you need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys please contact me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail).

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Faith Benvenuti
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix H



Letter of Invitation and Information

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6 completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study. The title of the study is Examining Relationships among Organizational School Climate, Student Competency, and Student Roles and Responsibilities. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university a MSVU faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. My research has been approved by the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. This study has been approved by The Annapolis Valley School Board Superintendent and your school principal.

This research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit the participant.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, please sign and date the attached letter of consent. These surveys will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Parents/guardians who struggle to read printed text can choose not to participate or contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

A letter of consent will be read aloud to all participating students. For those students who have difficulty decoding written text I will be available to read the surveys aloud to them.

I will obtain written consent from each participating adolescent. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that a student reports that he/she is at risk of physical or emotional harm then the researcher is obligated to contact either the students' parents or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that student receives appropriate protection and care.

The original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

Participants may contact the researchers to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can reach me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457- 6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If you need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys please contact me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail).

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Faith Benvenuti
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix I



Parental/Guardian Consent

I, _____, have read the letter of invitation and information regarding the study being conducted by Faith Benvenuti, Graduate Student, MSVU, 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6. I understand that this study has been approved by The Annapolis Valley School Board Superintendent and my child's school principal.

I understand that this research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit the participant.

As a participant, my child, will be asked to fill out four surveys that will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Parents/guardians who struggle to read printed text can choose not to participate or can contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

A letter of consent will be read aloud to all participating students. For those students who have difficulty decoding written text the researcher will be available to read the surveys aloud to them. The researcher will obtain written consent from each participating adolescent. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that my child reports that he/she is at risk of physical or emotional harm then the researcher is obligated to contact either me or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that my child receives appropriate protection and care.

The original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the

completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

Participants may contact the researchers to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

I can contact the researcher [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). I may also contact the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457- 6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If I need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys I can contact the researcher at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail).

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If I have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

With the knowledge of the aforementioned information, I agree to participate in this study.

Name (printed)

Name (signature)

Date (mm/dd/yy)

Witness

***Each parent/guardian must be provided with two copies of this form. One to be signed and returned to the researcher. The second to be retained for their own records should they require contact information.**

Appendix J



Letter of Invitation and Information

Date

Dear Student:

My name is Faith Benvenuti. I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6 completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study. The title of the study is Examining Relationships among Organizational School Climate, Student Competency, and Student Roles and Responsibilities. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university a MSVU faculty member, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins. My research has been approved by the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. This study has been approved by The Annapolis Valley School Board Superintendent and my child's school principal.

This research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit the participant.

If you agree to participate, please sign and date the attached letter of consent. These surveys will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. If your parents/guardians struggle to read printed text they will be given they can choose not to participate or can contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

A letter of consent will be read aloud to you. If you have difficulty decoding written text the researcher will be available to read the surveys aloud to you. The researcher will obtain written consent from you. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that you report that you are at risk of physical or emotional harm then the I am obligated to contact either your parents/guardians or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that you receive appropriate protection and care.

The original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

Participants may contact the researchers to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can reach me at [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457- 6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If you need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys you can ask the researcher for assistance in person, by telephone at [REDACTED] or, by email at [REDACTED]

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Faith Benvenuti
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix K



Consent of Participant

I, _____, have read the letter of invitation and information regarding the study being conducted by Faith Benvenuti, Graduate Student, MSVU, 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3M 2J6. I understand that this study has been approved by The Annapolis Valley School Board Superintendent and my child's school principal.

I understand that this research will survey youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Data collection will occur between February 2009 and June 2009 and will take place in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationship between how students view their school environment and how students feel and behave. This research will also attempt to gain an understanding of how student roles and responsibilities are related to how students view their school environment. Students participating in this study will complete four surveys. The first survey will ask students about different aspects of their school. The second survey will ask students about the ways in which they try to be helpful to their peers. The third survey will ask students about their general level of self-esteem. The fourth survey will ask students about their level of interest and commitment to school. It is hoped that the results from this study can be used to aid policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers in creating school environments that lead to the most desirable outcomes for the greatest number of students. Participation, however, may not directly benefit me.

As a participant I will be asked to fill out four surveys that will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. If my parents/guardians struggle to read printed text they can choose not to participate or contact the researcher by phone to have the letters of information and consent read aloud to them.

A letter of consent will be read aloud to me. If I have difficulty decoding written text the researcher will be available to read the surveys aloud to me. The researcher will obtain written consent from me. All data collected will be confidential and the researcher will not identify any individual participants or schools. In the case, however, that you report that you are at risk of physical or emotional harm then I am obligated to contact either your parents/guardians or the appropriate social services organization in order to ensure that you receive appropriate protection and care.

I understand that the original letters of consent and completed surveys will be stored in a locked file in the thesis supervisor's office. The researcher and her thesis supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires for the purposes of analysis. No one else will

have access to these questionnaires. All consent forms will be stored separately from completed questionnaires. Each questionnaire will be assigned a code and only this code will be used to identify student responses during the process of data analysis. Once the data has been analyzed and written up the original surveys will be shredded. After five years all hard copies will be destroyed. My confidentiality will be protected in any written work related to this research. No names of either schools or individual participants will appear in publications.

I am aware that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time or decline to answer any questions if I so desire. Participation is not related to any part of academic requirements and there will be no negative consequences for choosing not to participate or for withdrawing from the study at any time. Data resulting from the study may appear in publications.

I am aware that I may contact the researcher to request the findings and/or any publications resulting from the study.

If I have any questions or concerns about participating in this research I can contact the researcher [REDACTED] (telephone) or [REDACTED] (e-mail). I may also contact the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Mary Jane Harkins, at (902) 457-6595 (telephone) or maryjane.harkins@msvu.ca (e-mail).

If you need assistance reading or understanding letters, consent forms, or surveys you can ask the researcher for assistance in person, by telephone at [REDACTED] or, by email at [REDACTED]

This research has been approved by the MSVU's University Research Ethics Board. If I have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak to someone who is not involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, via e-mail at -research@msvu.ca or telephone (902)457-6296.

With the knowledge of the aforementioned information, I agree to participate in this study.

Name (printed)

Name (signature)

Date (mm/dd/yy)

Witness

***Each participant must be provided with two copies of this form. One to be signed and returned to the researcher. The second to be retained for their own records should they require contact information.**

Appendix L

Resources

If you need protection from physical or emotional harm, then you may consider the following resources.

In Nova Scotia: Child Protection Services 1-877-424-1177 during office hours
1-866-922-2434 after 4:30 pm, on weekends,
or on holidays

In Newfoundland: Child Protection Services Eastern Regional Health Authority

██████████

After hours call ██████████

Central Regional Health Authority

██████████

After hours call ██████████

Western Regional Health Authority

██████████

After hours call (██████████)

Labrador- Grenfell Health Authority

██████████

After hours call (██████████)

If you need help coping with a personal problem, then you may consider the following resource.

In Nova Scotia and Newfoundland:

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

Kids Help Phone provides counseling over the phone
24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

