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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

By

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

By

Andrea Perkins

The legislative milieu of the *No Child Left Behind Act of* 2001(NCLB) creates pressure for school districts, administrators, and educators to meet and exceed achievement goals for *all students* on an annual basis. The essential ingredients for evaluating capacity for the implementation of this type of reform in schools, as hypothesized in the current study, are school climate, social capital, and sense of empowerment. The theoretical framework to investigate this relationship of these variables was Spreitzer's (1997) model of individual empowerment in organizations. When applied to the field of education, Spreitzer's model suggests the need for schools to facilitate the development these conditions in an attempt to create constructive school conditions that lead to desired outcomes for students.

The purposes of the current study were to (1) examine the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment among professional school personnel and (2) explicate the relationships among the components of sense of empowerment among professional school personnel. Participants included professional school staff from a suburban school district in Michigan (n = 98). The *School Climate Inventory* (The Center for Research in Educational Policy, 2001) and the *School Participant Empowerment Scale* (Short & Rinehart, 1992) were used to operationally define variables. Canonical correlation analysis and multiple regression were used to investigate the purposes, respectively.

The canonical correlation for the first and only canonical variate was .73. As such, 53% of the variance between the school social structure and sense of empowerment variables is explained by the first canonical variate. This finding suggests that a moderate relationship exists between the social structure and empowerment variable sets. Collaboration had the greatest ratio of importance for the criterion variables of social structure, whereas Professional Growth and Impact had the greatest importance for the predictor variables of sense of empowerment. For the regression analysis, each of the three predictor variables of Self-Determination, Competence, and Meaning entered the regression equation at statistically significant levels and added to the variance accounted for in the criterion variable of Impact. The adjusted R^2 of the entire model was .67.

The results of the current study support the body of literature which suggests that collegiality and the use of learning communities are hallmarks of a positive school environment. As such, the development of positive school environments may be most effectively promoted through professional development/training, collaborative work arrangements, and recognition of the contributions of all school personnel (Status). Also, Involvement of parents and the community was found to be of less importance in relation to empowerment than Collaboration. This finding emphasizes the significance of internal social capital for promoting organizational empowerment over external capital. Finally, Professional Growth, as a measure of competence, was the most important predictor variable in relation to social structure. This suggests that the level and quality of competence among school personnel is a significant factor in relation to social structure and overall empowerment, and, by extension, potentially student achievement outcomes.

To Rich.

We were just kids when we set out on our dreams. But, through perseverance, much encouragement, and the grace of God, we will both now be known as Doctor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYP	Annual Yearly Progress
CDTE	Consumer-Directed Theory of Empowerment
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
SCI	School Climate Inventory
SPES	School Participant Empowerment Scale
STWL	School-to-Work-to-Life Model of Transition
USDOE	United States Department of Education

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Students with disabilities have lagged behind their peers in the general student population with respect to academic achievement (Prince, 2004; Walberg, 2005), graduation rate (Grayson, 1998; Ochs & Roessler, 2001), post-secondary school enrollment (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Fairweather & Shaver, 1991), and post-school vocational and independent living outcomes (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Kohler & Field, 2003; Kosciulek & Perkins, 2005). However, due in part to legislative mandates, the number of students who have participated in special education has increased during the past 25 years. Giuliano (2004) reported that from the 1976-1977 to 2000-2001 school years the number of students from age 3 through age 21 served by special education programs rose by nearly 2.6 million, equaling a 70 percent increase in participation. Participation rates for special education have increased in part because members of marginalized groups, including migrant students, minority students, students with limited English proficiency, and students labeled as 'behavior problems' have increasingly been overrepresented in special education classes (Artiles, 2003; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Patton, 1998). These groups have experienced the same gaps in achievement and outcomes when compared to other general education students (Geenen, Powers, Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003; Prince, 2004).

In response to these findings, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) was crafted to address the education and transition needs of students with disabilities (Edmondson & Cain, 2002), focusing on choice, empowerment, and student participation (Rusch & Millar, 1998; Wehmeyer, 1998). Under IDEA, most recently

reauthorized in 2004, special education students must be granted access to the same quality and type of curriculum and instruction as all other students. IDEA has recently been strengthened through its alignment with the national education agenda of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). The *No Child Left Behind Act* was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002 and affected education from elementary to high school (USDOE, 2004). The purpose of this legislation was to raise student achievement and address the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers (Prince, 2004), which include students with disabilities.

Statement of Problem

Over the past twenty years, reform efforts in education have been focused on crafting legislation and policy (Brotherson, Cook, Wehmeyer, & Cuconan-Lahr, 1995; Burgstahler, 2001; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Stodden, 1998), preparing students to exit school with the skills necessary to compete in the current workplace (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Solsberg, Howard, Blustein, & Close, 2002), and implementing best practices for student performance (deFur, 2003; Kohler, 1998; Rusch & Millar, 1998; Siegel, 1998). In most schools, the manifestation of these practices has been divided along the lines of general and special education (Halpern, 1999). Despite being housed in the same buildings, having access to similar resources, and abiding by the rules of the same administration, special and general educators often assume a vision and role that is reserved only for the students with whom they work. The enactment of NCLB has given rise to the need to abandon this boundary and shift paradigms in order to achieve the spirit and letter of the legislation.

The legislative milieu of *No Child Left Behind* creates pressure for school districts, administrators, and educators to meet and exceed achievement goals for *all students* on an annual basis. A school or school district is considered to be 'in need of improvement' if it cannot meet its state's definition of 'adequate yearly progress' (AYP), across the school or within any subgroup (e.g., minority, ESL, students with disabilities), for two consecutive years (USDOE, 2004). According to Darling-Hammond (2004), an estimated 26,000 of the nation's 93,000 schools failed to make adequate yearly progress in 2004. Many schools fell short of their AYP goals because of the poor achievement performance of specific subgroups, such as minorities and students with disabilities (Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005).

As a result of their students' inability make adequate progress on NCLB assessment measures, special educators sometimes find themselves being blamed for their school being put on the 'failing list' (Karp, 2004). However, the overall performance of the school and its students should be the concern and responsibility of all teachers and administrators, regardless of their area of instruction or specialty. To attend to these circumstances, general and special education teachers must become knowledgeable and skilled in instruction methods and pedagogy for all students, including students with disabilities, so that all students can achieve high academic standards (USDOE, 2004). NCLB promotes collaboration between general and special education teachers to ensure quality education for all.

An appropriate framework for a cohesive and inclusive curriculum for all students would best be rooted in a transition philosophy. The current focus on transition-related services has resulted from legislation, investment in transition services development, and

effective transition practices research (Kohler & Field, 2003). While the intent of transition is to ensure that students leave school knowing who they are, what they want to do with their lives, and what supports they will need to accomplish their goals (Tashie, Malloy, & Lichtenstein, 1998), transition planning need not be reserved for high school years. The recent trend in transition and vocational education is to begin such processes as early and often as possible (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000; Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999). Transition points should be identified at a student's move between any two systems (e.g., elementary to middle school, middle to high school, high school to career or post-secondary education).

To be effective, a model of transition-focused education should be fully integrated in the general curriculum. Full integration of a transition-focused curriculum, as an avenue to achieve better NCLB outcomes, requires high levels of collaboration among general and special educators. Karp (2004) expressed that the keys to school improvement were not standards and tests, but the teachers and students. Fullan (2003) summarized the need for teacher involvement in school change efforts, stating: "...there is such a depth of knowledge required to go to new horizons that we can't possibly generate it without the ideas of teachers and principals coming to bear on complex problems...we can't sustain the effort required unless local educators pour in their purpose, passion, and concomitant energy" (p. 48). By involving teachers directly in the change process, rather than relying on a top-down administrative approach, teachers can move toward ownership of the undertakings that occur in their district.

Implementation of NCLB has produced a culture of accountability within our educational system (Walberg, 2005). Historically, attention to standards has tended to be

at the state and federal level (Halpern, 1999), but the importance of implementation and action also needs to be considered at the local level. Schools and districts need to become collaborative, professional learning communities because, as Fullan (2003) stated, these communities "not only build confidence and competence, but they also make teachers and principals realize that they can't go the distance alone" (p. 44). Furney and colleagues (1997) noted the inherent difficulty at the local level with policy compliance:

> "...the more general literature on policy implementation suggested that the implementation of *any* policy is a challenging prospect. The current literature regards policy implementation not as an event, but a slow, incremental, and multifacteted process that must take into account local context and values; encourage the development of local capacity and will; and empower local implementers to take ownership for implementing, evaluating, revising, and incorporating changes into daily practice" (p. 344).

An evaluation of the system where policies and reform efforts will be implemented should be conducted to ensure that these efforts tap into the resources and capacity of the staff, school, and community. The previous excerpt from Furney et al. (1997) draws attention to the essential ingredients for evaluating capacity for the implementation of reform in schools: school climate, social capital, and teacher empowerment. These concepts are intertwined with one another and outline the fundamental components for understanding the scope of potential within a district. Education should be embraced as a collective enterprise, with frequent analysis and evaluation in order for continuous improvement to occur (Rosenholtz, Bassler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 1986). These concepts also shape the focus for evaluation efforts.

Theoretical Framework

An investigation of social capital, school climate, and teacher empowerment can be seen as a first step to achieving better performance outcomes for students. Spreitzer's (1997) model of individual empowerment in organizations can be used as a paradigm for such an investigation. As illustrated in Figure 1, in this model, social structural antecedents (organic structure, access to strategic information, access to organizational resources, organizational culture) are mediated by a psychological sense of empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, impact) to produce behavioral outcomes (innovation, upward influence, effectiveness).

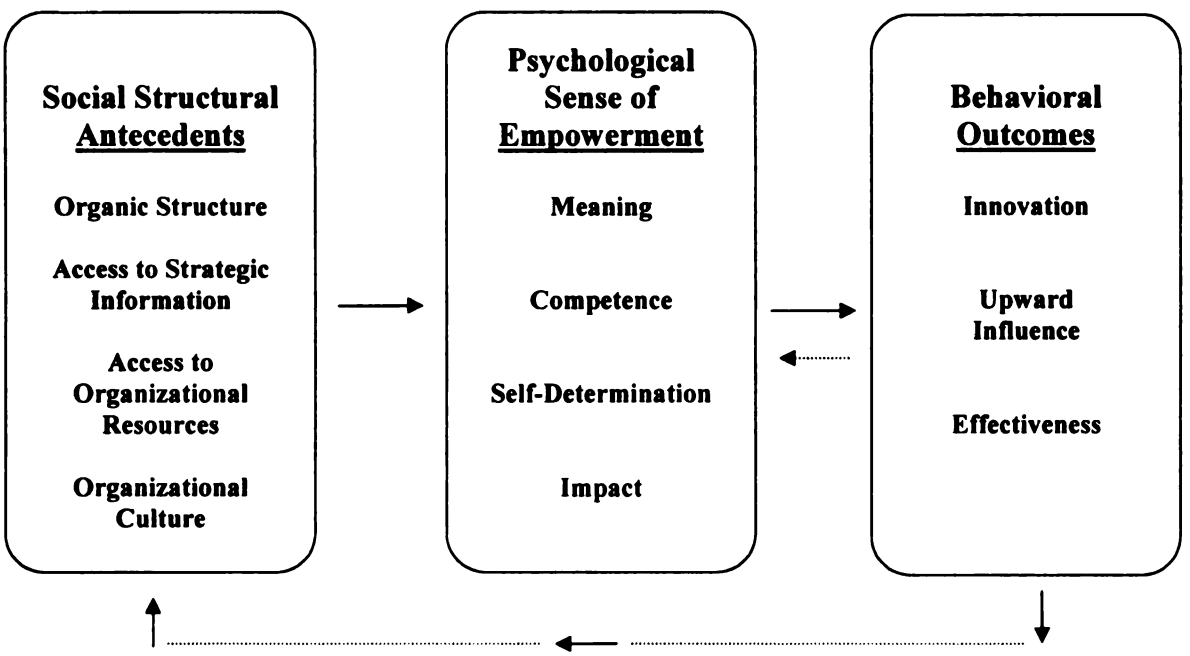

Figure 1: A Theoretical Model of Individual Empowerment in Organizations

From Spreitzer, G. (1997). *Toward a common ground in defining empowerment.* In W. A. Pasmore & R. W. Woodman (Eds.), Research in organizational change and development, Vol. 10 (pp. 31-62).Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Inc.

Social Structural Antecedents

The social structural antecedents of the work environment are considered individual interpretations of the employee, rather than objective characteristics of the work environment itself (Spreitzer, 1995b, 1996). Those variables that challenge the assumptions of a traditional bureaucratic structure are hypothesized to facilitate empowerment (Spreitzer, 1997). Less hierarchical, organic systems which emphasize flexibility, adaptability, and innovation, along with access to sources of system power (e.g., resources, information, and support) and an organizational culture which values human assets have been proposed to be empowering (Spreitzer, 1997).

Psychological Sense of Empowerment

A sense of empowerment has been implied as a mediating influence in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995b); the social structural context of the organization is not sufficient to produce behavioral outcomes. Empowerment is not a collection of management practices, but rather a set of characteristics reflecting the personal beliefs and mind-set an individual has about his/her role in the organization (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Together, the four attributes of an interpersonal sense of empowerment reflect an active, rather than passive, orientation to a work role (Spreitzer, 1996).

Meaning is defined as a purpose and involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and the individual's values, beliefs, and behaviors (Spreitzer, 1995a). Competence can be conceived as self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill (Spreitzer, 1995b). Self-determination denotes a sense of choice in initiating and regulating actions, akin to autonomy (Spreitzer, 1995b).

Impact, which is opposite the concept of learned helplessness, is a sense of personal control over outcomes in the organization (Spreitzer, 1997).

Behavioral Outcomes

Spreitzer (1997) postulated that "because empowerment reflects an active self-orientation to one's work role, it is reasonable to expect that an active mindset will translate into proactive behavior" (p. 52). Through empowerment, individuals are more likely to challenge common expectations, be upwardly influencing, and engage in innovation. Empowered individuals will be more likely to pursue inquiry (Vogt & Murrell, 1990), improve their effectiveness (Spreitzer, 1995b), and experience greater job satisfaction (Thomas & Tymon, 1994).

Significance of the Problem

Despite its noble intent, the *No Child Left Behind Act* has received criticism because of the burden that it places on school districts and its seemingly unattainable standards (e.g., Meier & Wood, 2004; Sunderman et al., 2005). The reality, however, is that NCLB is the prevailing education reform agenda and teachers and districts are accountable to its standards. In addition to achievement standards, NCLB also advocates for schools to increase the quality of their teachers, make connections to the community and with parents, and explore ways to increase spending flexibility to allow more freedom to implement innovations and allocate resources in the most efficacious way (USDOE, 2004). The theoretical framework presented above suggests the need for schools to facilitate the development of school climate, social capital, and empowerment, which, in turn, will lead to desired outcomes for students.

Purpose of the Study

Systemic change means that reform efforts must focus on the interrelationship among all the primary aspects of a school, such as teachers, students, curriculum, and the community, and not only policy and regulations (Fullan & Miles, 1992). For commitment to be sustained by all members, the school environment, as well as the processes to develop and implement policies, must be empowering (Cherniss, 1997). If the climate of the school does not value collaboration and a willingness to pursue innovation, then the goals of continuous improvement and quality education for *all* students may not be realized. The insight that is gained from the primary constituents of a community is a driving force for capacity building and the task of continuous improvement. Fetterman (2002) articulated that "the aim is to try to understand what is going on in a situation from the participant's own perspective as accurately and honestly as possible and then proceed to improve it with meaningful goals and strategies and credible documentation" (p. 89). Therefore, the present study focused on the perceptions of school personnel in order to yield data useful for better understanding these interrelationships.

This investigation had two purposes. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment among professional school personnel. A study of the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment among school personnel may yield data useful for school districts to assess internal assets and barriers which will lead to higher achievement for students. The research question of interest in relation to the primary purpose was as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between school social structure and teacher empowerment?

Given its potential significance in the process of promoting higher student achievement and its centrality in Spreitzer's (1997) model, detailed exploration of the sense of empowerment of school personnel was warranted. As such, the secondary purpose of this study was to explore the construct of sense of empowerment. The relationship of the components of sense of empowerment to one another was explored. Spreitzer and colleagues (Spreitzer 1995b, 1996; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997) have investigated the antecedents to sense of empowerment, the social structural characteristics related to empowerment, and the individual dimensions of empowerment related to job effectiveness, satisfaction, and strain. However, none of their studies explored the relationship among the four individual components of empowerment postulated in the model (i.e., meaning, competence, impact, self-determination). In one study using Spreitzer's multidimensional empowerment construct, Kraimer, Seibert, and Liden (1999) confirmed the discriminant validity of the four dimensions and convergent validity for a single, higher order factor of empowerment. The model that resulted from their study indicated that self-determination was a precursor to impact, given the high correlation between the two variables. It was therefore hypothesized in the present study that all components of empowerment may have a temporal, cyclical effect on one another.

I hypothesized that self-determination is an initial component in the development of a sense of empowerment. Through a greater experience of self-determination, school personnel will begin to feel more competent in their professional role. Professional

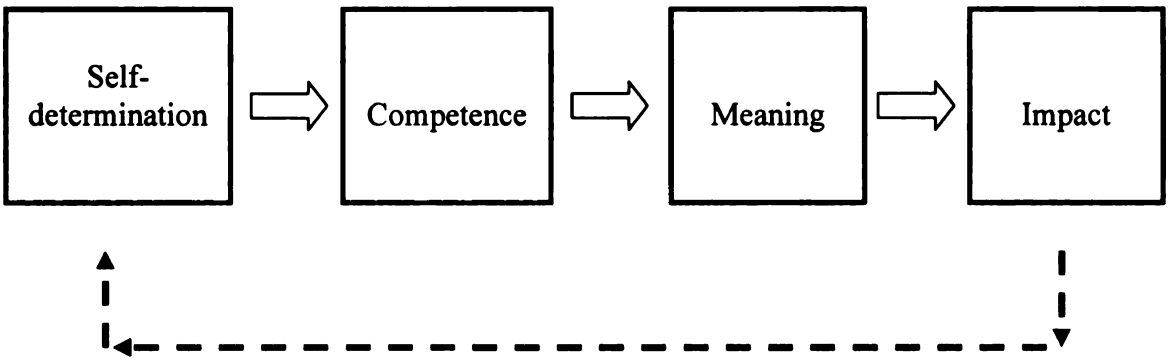

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for the Relationship among the Components of Sense of Empowerment

competence will lead to a greater sense of purpose and meaning to the individual, with the external benefit of increased status among colleagues. With greater status and purpose of role, teachers will have a more significant impact through increased control. This impact and achievement of control are desired outcomes that continue to feed the cycle of sense of empowerment. The internal and external incentives of accomplishments serve to strengthen personnel's experiences of self-determination and motivate them to continually renew the empowerment cycle through professional development and collaboration with colleagues. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework of this hypothesized relationship among the components of empowerment. To explore the above conceptualization of the interrelationships among the components of sense of empowerment, the following research question was addressed:

Research Question 2: What is the relationship among the components of empowerment?

Utility of the Research

The utility of the current line of research is threefold. First, by exploring the elements that comprise school climate, social capital, and staff empowerment,

administrators will be better able to pinpoint areas for staff development and school improvement. For example, if teachers have voiced concerns that they lack satisfaction in their job, through professional development, the administration may be able to target the Meaning aspect of teacher empowerment and focus on improving their efficacy for teaching. A second use of this research is to understand the organizational and community factors at the local level that can be used to create a better teaching and learning environment. Positive environments should breed positive people and results. And, finally, turning attention to the school as a whole and its responsibility to produce favorable outcomes for *all students* will positively impact students with disabilities and other marginalized groups by including them in the solution rather than blaming them for the problem.

Brief Overview of the Study

The participants in this study were professional school personnel from the Haslett, MI school district. Social structure, in terms of a school setting, was conceptualized by school climate and social capital. The relationship between the components of the district schools' social structure and the sense of empowerment among professional school personnel was investigated. Data related to school social structure and sense of empowerment were collected from district personnel via paper and pencil format in each of the six district school buildings. The relationship between these constructs was analyzed using canonical correlation. In addition, the relationship among the components of sense of empowerment among school personnel was investigated via regression using the *School Participant Empowerment Scale* (Short & Rinehart, 1992).

Definition of Terms

Social capital: features of a social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action (Putnam, 1993).

School climate: emphasizes the feeling and contemporary tone of the school, the feeling of the relationships, and the morale among staff (Peterson & Deal, 2002).

Empowerment: a set of dimensions that characterize an environment's interaction with persons in it so as to encourage their taking initiative to improve processes and to take action (Herrenkohl, Judson, & Heffner, 1999). The common set of dimensions that define the psychological experience of empowerment in the workplace, which includes a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1997).

Meaning: a sense of purpose that involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and the individual's values, beliefs, and behaviors (Spreitzer, 1995a).

Competence: self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill (Spreitzer, 1995b).

Self-determination: autonomy, or a sense of choice in initiating and regulating actions (Spreitzer, 1995b).

Impact: a sense of personal control over outcomes in an organization (Spreitzer, 1997).

School personnel: school staff employed in a professional role (i.e., general education teacher, special education teacher, counselors, administrators, paraprofessional) who have completed at least two years of post-secondary education.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The educational agenda and policy of greatest concern to educators in contemporary schools is the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). The *No Child Left Behind Act* was signed into law in 2002 and affected education from elementary to high school (USDOE, 2004). The intent of this legislation was to improve overall student achievement and address the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers (Prince, 2004). The main accountability component to NCLB is mandated standardized tests that are administered yearly to every child in grades three through eight and at least once in high school to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) (Goertz, 2005). Students in schools that underperform for two consecutive years have the option of switching to a higher performing public school in their district, while those in schools that underperform for three years can gain access to supplemental tutoring services (Howell, 2006). However, plans for accountability and achieving performance standards by 2014 are left up to individuals states, meaning that AYP requirements make school performance look worse in states with more demanding plans (Hess, 2005).

NCLB has been described as a path to educational transformation and a key to racial equity and economic success (Sunderman et al., 2005). Unfortunately, the policy emphasizes the responsibility and opportunities for students in the school setting, while it deemphasizes the social and economic factors that impact students beyond the school walls. Neither of the unions representing educators—the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association—supported the institution of this

legislation. Despite differing approaches to securing change, both bodies felt that the legislation is underfunded, has too great of a reliance on standardized testing as the sole accountability measure, and ignores the real challenges faced in urban district (i.e., factors outside of the school that cannot be controlled) (Koppich, 2005).

Sunderman and colleagues (2005) claimed that the assumption underlying NCLB was that schools would solely be able to achieve unprecedented levels of academic achievement for all students in a short space of time and without changing any of the other inequalities in their lives. Many analysts believe that NCLB treats educational improvement as a regulatory rather than as an educational and professional problem. Goertz (2005) stated that "the design of NCLB is based on the assumption that public reporting of test scores, the identification of schools that do not make AYP, and the threat of consequences for schools that fail to improve will create incentives for educators to work 'harder and smarter'" (p. 82).

The current need in school reform is to fit reform goals to what is known about educational opportunity and to encourage the development of comprehensive reforms that can take years of focused and concerted effort to achieve real breakthroughs (Sunderman et al., 2005). School personnel at the local level can serve as the driving force behind educational improvement. Capacity at the local level grounds the assumptions of NCLB. Goertz (2005) asserted that the law assumes that states and local school districts possess or can develop the capacity to assist in improvement efforts to bring all students to proficiency, as well as pay for these efforts. Discussing what individual teachers and schools could do to participate in reform, Fullan (2003) suggested understanding overriding educational agendas, working together, looking to supportive leaders, and

seeking external linkages that have capacity-building resources.

In a survey of teachers conducted in urban school districts in 2004 regarding NCLB and reform, Sunderman and colleagues (2004) found that teachers reported that reform was underway prior to NCLB and that this legislation may have disrupted their efforts, as low performing districts tend to continually change their educational programs in response to calls for reform. These teachers also felt that they could better assist students to meet improvement standards through more resources, additional time to collaborate, smaller class sizes, more experienced staff, more involvement of parents, and removal of ineffective personnel. In response to the results, Sunderman and colleagues (2004) recommended additional or reallocated resources within districts, nurturing of committed long-term leaders in poorly performing schools, funding and collaboration for staffs to improve low retention and high turnover, and a refocusing of accountability measures away from sole reliance on standardized testing.

Teachers should have a voice in reform efforts because while teachers may be motivated to learn new practices and improve student learning, "what they lack is a sense of individual and collective agency, or control, over the organizational conditions that affect the learning of students and adults in their schools" (Elmore, 2002, p. 24). Such control can be facilitated through a social structure that provides quality relationships and resources. A school climate valuing collaboration, collegiality, and innovation, the conditions for teachers to develop a sense of empowerment, will also lead to more efficacious outcomes.

The purposes of the current study were to (1) explore the relationship between school social structure and the empowerment of school personnel and (2) evaluate the

concept of empowerment among school personnel. To provide a comprehensive review of social structure and empowerment in a context of school setting, the literature review addressed three areas. First, a framework for approaching school reform will be discussed. Second, a model for organizing the relationship between the social structure of schools and empowerment will be presented. Finally, the major variables of interest in this study will be described, including school climate, social capital, and empowerment.

Reforming Schools

The abundance of literature on effective education has focused on student outcomes as they relate to a school's ability to prepare students for assuming future roles. These outcomes have included achievement (e.g., Picus, Marion, Calvo, & Glenn, 2005; Sheldon & Biddle, 1998), interpersonal gains (e.g., Daniel & King, 1997; Dincher & McGuire, 1994), and transition from school to adult life (e.g., Geenen et al., 2003; Morgan, Moore, McSweyn, & Salzberg, 1992). Given its strong research tradition, this final outcome area, transitioning of students through the stages of schooling and into life after high school, is an important paradigm through which to conceptualize student achievement and skill development.

The interest in school-to-work transition grew out of acknowledgement that employees needed to have competitive skills to be marketable in today's workplace, that a growing number of students were exiting school without these skills, and that schools were failing to prepare students for these demands (Benz et al., 1997). Legislation was enacted throughout the 1990's to address these deficits. Guidance for these educational policies came from reports by the Secretary of Education's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), which indicated the academic skills, thinking skills, and

personal qualities needed to meet educational goals and compete in current and future job markets (Solberg et al., 2002). The current education policy milieu is being driven by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. To attend to the requirements of NCLB, a framework of best practice is useful to structure the process to achieve these ends.

Reform framework. An organizing framework for reform in education can first begin with a focus on student transition between school levels, as well as the transition to life after school, in order to prepare students to make adequate progress and acquire appropriate skills. Transition is viewed as a system of planning that supports the movement of a student through and out of high school, as the bridge between school and adulthood. The intent of transition planning is to ensure that students leave school knowing who they are, what they want to do with their lives, and the supports they will need to accomplish their goals (Tashie et al., 1998).

Models of transition can be helpful when assumed within the educational philosophy of a school. Solberg and colleagues (2002) proposed the school-to-work-to-life (STWL) model as a framework for lifespan transition. This framework is guided by the assumptions that development continues across the lifespan and is shaped by the person's context and exposure to positive, challenging learning environments. The STWL model emphasizes the interacting systems of the individual and the need to target interventions at these system levels. Kohler (1998) also proposed a systemic model for a transition curriculum. The author's Taxonomy for Transition Programming recognized student-focused planning, family involvement, program structure and attributes, interagency collaboration, and student development as essential for efficacious transition programs. Hallmark program structures of efficient and effective transition programs also

include variety in curricular options, a clearly articulated mission and values, sufficient resources, qualified staff, and collaborative mechanisms to facilitate systems change (Kohler & Field, 2003).

Kohler and Field (2003) stated that "the field learned that successful transition requires the development of a student's abilities through education and other experiences, specific supports that enhance or facilitate those abilities, and opportunities through which one can apply those abilities" (p. 175). The concept of *transition-focused education* means that transition is not seen as an additive to the curriculum but the fundamental basis to education founded on abilities, options, and self-determination. Student-focused planning is based on the identification of students' interests and preferences to be used in goal setting and self-exploration activities across the curriculum. Student development activities focus on preparing individuals to assume adult roles. Collaborative activities with agencies that can assist students provide immediate services for current students, but also address community issues that can be beneficial to all current and future students.

The special education literature is replete with concerns as to whether students with disabilities can reach the levels of achievement that have been set by *No Child Left Behind* (e.g., Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003; Simpson, 2005; Steffan, 2004). A second component of reforming schools to attend to the achievement of *all* students, therefore, is to develop collaborative efforts among general and special educators. NCLB has influenced the inevitable merging of reform agendas within schools, including both general and special education. Achieving the standards set forth by this legislation calls for a refocusing of educational philosophy and collaboration that spans across the local

school districts. Halpern (1999) suggested several areas for focusing unified reform efforts, including students assuming responsibility for their own education, enhancing teachers' skills in transition, facilitating the use of proven best practices and programs, and working to enhance the integration of special education and transition within general education reform. Schools operate under general and special education legislation and agendas simultaneously, so educators need to team to develop a philosophy that creates a continuum of services throughout the district to ensure the highest potential of all students to assume the responsibilities of citizenship and adulthood.

General and special education can reciprocally inform one another. In a special education investigation, Furney, Hasazi, and Destefano (1997) conducted a policy study to investigate the statewide implementation of transition services for youth with disabilities thay could be used as a basis for school improvement efforts. Seven themes for effective execution were identified and retained from the study: (1) the role of shared values and beliefs in creating an environment conducive to the implementation of transition policies and practices; (2) using direct policy approaches to create changes related to transition; (3) paving the way for change by uniting leadership and advocacy; (4) building collaborative structures to promote systemic change; (5) using the results of research and evaluation to inform change efforts; (6) building the capacity for long-lasting change; and (7) looking ahead by linking transition to other restructuring efforts. The underlying tenet of these themes is that transition should be viewed as a 'big picture' initiative of social responsibility, with leadership and autonomy given at the local levels to direct efforts and collaboration.

Focusing on the local level, the final component for reforming schools to achieve

NCLB standards for all students is to develop local capacity for change and accountability. The unit of analysis that will yield the richest data on the effect of policy on student outcomes is the individual school or district because of its proximal impact on students. Energy and effort should focus on how local entities are progressing in relation to the current policy milieu. Sunderman and colleagues (2005) posited that reliance on federal and state regulatory processes to force compliance deemphasizes the need to build state and local capacity and does not consider the expectations needed to ensure local buy-in for the policy. Neill (2004) proposed principles for authentic accountability within school systems. These principles included (1) shared vision and goals, (2) adequate resources used well, (3) participation and democracy among school personnel, (4) prioritizing goals, (5) relying on multiple forms of accountability evidence, (6) inclusion of all students, (7) induction of improvement and professional development, (8) equity, (9) a balance of bottom-up and top-down accountability, and (10) interventions that produce improvement. These principles are consistent with the philosophical objectives of the current study and are applicable to focusing attention at the local level.

Each of the three components outlined above—transition-focused education, collaboration among general and special education personnel, and development of local capacity—point to the need to explore aspects within a district that would make each of these goals a reality. As such, the primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the social structure of a school district and the empowerment of school personnel. The following section of this literature review describes a model that can be useful when studying schools and school personnel.

Spreitzer's Model of Individual Empowerment in Organizations

As discussed in Chapter 1, the social structure of a school and its ability to empower teachers and other professional personnel can be a vehicle for generating collaboration among staff to achieve successful outcomes for all students (see Figure 1, p. 6). While the administration is historically responsible for leadership within schools, this structure must be inverted to embrace one that generates energy from those personnel closest to the students. Elmore (2002) articulated that "the idea behind distributed leadership is that the complex nature of instructional practice requires people to operate in networks of shared and complimentary expertise rather than in hierarchies" (p. 24). However, empowered teachers might pose a threat to administrations that do not value such qualities (Cherniss, 1997). Investigation of the social structure of a school and the sense of empowerment embodied by its staff is an initial step in working toward more successful outcomes for students.

The model for the present study was adopted from the realm of business and organizational development. Spreitzer's (1997) model of individual empowerment in organizations depicted psychological empowerment as a mediating variable between the social structure of an organization and the outcomes it wishes to achieve. Psychological empowerment encompasses intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral empowerment. Specific characteristics of organizational social structure include the input variables of lack of role ambiguity, sociopolitical support, access to information and resources, and work culture. The common set of dimensions that define the psychological experience of empowerment in the workplace includes a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Generally speaking, meaning is defined as purpose,

competence as self-efficacy, self-determination as a sense of choice in initiating and regulation one's actions, and impact as the degree to which one can influence outcomes (Spreitzer, 1997). The four dimensions reflect a proactive rather than passive orientation to the individual's role in the workplace.

Components of Spreitzer's model are dependent on the perceptions and interpretations of the individuals in the organization. Spreitzer's theoretical framework linked individual interpretations of the work environment, rather than 'objective' characteristics of the work environment, to individual components of empowerment. As such, empowerment involves an understanding of the sociopolitical environment of the organization, resulting not in a static personality trait, but rather a dynamic context driven construct (Spreitzer, 1995a). Spreitzer (1995b) outlined three general assumptions that should be made about her definition of empowerment:

> First, empowerment is not an enduring personality trait generalizable across situations, but rather a set of cognitions shaped by a work environment. Thus, empowerment reflects the ongoing ebb and flow of people's perceptions about themselves in relation to their work environments. Second, empowerment is a continuous variable; people can be viewed as more or less empowered, rather than empowered or not empowered. Third, empowerment is not a global construct generalizable across different life situations and roles but rather, specific to the work domain. (p. 1444)

These assumptions were central to the present study. The perceptions of the study participants about their work environment and sense of empowerment represented a snapshot of their continual 'ebb and flow.' In addition, the representation of sense of

empowerment sought in this study was rooted to and contextualized by the school environment. It was not assumed that the rating of empowerment represented a global measure of the individuals' empowerment, but rather one specific to their role as a professional school employee.

Spreitzer and colleagues empirically tested components of the model of individual empowerment in organizations throughout several studies. Using a sample of 393 mid-level managers from a *Fortune 500* industrial organization, Spreitzer (1995b, 1996) investigated the antecedents to sense of empowerment and the social structural characteristics related to empowerment. In examining these antecedents via structural equation modeling, Spreitzer (1995b) found that self-esteem, access to information about an organization's mission, rewards, and information about unit performance were significantly related to empowerment, while locus of control was not. Spreitzer (1996) found that the social structural characteristics of an organization varied in their relationship to sense of empowerment. Wide span of control, sociopolitical support, access to information, and unit climate were significantly, positively correlated with empowerment, while role ambiguity was significantly, negatively correlated. Access to resources, however, was not related to empowerment.

Using the same sample data, Spreitzer, Kizilos, and Nason (1997) investigated the individual dimensions of empowerment related to job effectiveness, satisfaction, and strain, which were identified in extant literature to be anticipated outcomes of empowerment. Competence, self-determination, and impact were found to be related to effectiveness, while meaning was not. Work satisfaction was positively related to all dimensions, with the most significant variance being explained by meaning. Only

competence was related to lower levels of job-related strain. Given that no single dimension of empowerment was related to all three outcomes, the findings in this study indicate the importance of using a multidimensional conceptualization of empowerment in achieving desired job outcomes, such as that adopted for the present study.

Kramer, Seibert, and Liden (1999) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of data provided from a sample of nurses (n = 160) to test the construct validity of Spreitzer's multidimensional empowerment construct. Using the scale Spreitzer developed in her original research, these researchers found support for the use of a multidimensional model of empowerment over a single-dimensional construct. Discriminant validity of the four empowerment dimensions and convergent validity for a single, higher order factor of empowerment were found in this sample. The model that resulted indicated that self-determination was a precursor to impact.

Spreitzer's (1997) model was used as the theoretical framework in this study. Initially developed for use in general organizations, it was applied to the school as an organization. Within this context, school climate and social capital were used as the characteristics of school social structure. Spreitzer's (1997) conceptualization of sense of empowerment was retained. This multidimensional perspective aligns well with research on schools in relation to teachers' sense of competence and self-efficacy (Cherniss, 1997), status among colleagues (Husband & Short, 1994), and perceptions of self-determination (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000). The following sections will address the variables of interest in the proposed study.

School Climate

School climate is a multidimensional construct encompassing organizational, instructional, and interpersonal dimensions (Loukas & Robinson, 2004). School climate underlies individual values, behaviors, and group norms. Organizational dimensions of climate include staff stability, administrative support, and appropriate financial and human resources. School climate also relates to a school's approach to achievement and discipline, which impact its participants' motivation toward success and compliance to rules. Gittlesohn and colleagues (2003) highlighted the multifaceted nature of this construct:

> School climate can be defined as the characteristics that distinguish one school from another and that affect the behavior of people within the school. A school's climate is dynamic, based on the perceptions of its members, and is influenced by the school's formal and informal organization, staff morale, and the leadership of the school. (p. S98)

An environment that encourages school members to form positive emotional bonds with others and a positive attitude toward the school facilitates students' motivation to learn and succeed in learning (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). As such, interest in the environmental conditions of schools is integral to the school improvement movement (Freiberg, 1998). In order for change to be successful, cultural aspects to support change must first be in place (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005). All stakeholders in school improvement efforts must understand the power of school culture (Fiore, 2001). Maehr and Midgley (1996) have advocated using culture as the construct to understand nonproductive investment in schools because it involves seeing the school as a

functioning system, drawing attention to how individuals function within a group and how groups draw on resources and focus the efforts of individuals.

Comparison and contrast of school culture and school climate. Contemporary researchers interested in the study of school culture have investigated the more readily available and observable construct of school climate to understand the milieu underpinning school improvement and student achievement. Despite the tendency of some researchers to use the terms school culture and climate interchangeably (Van Houtte, 2005), each has a distinct role in the discourse of school environments. Culture can be identified by role models, communication networks, rites and rituals, history, rules and sanctions, and the physical environment (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005). Culture is concerned with traditions, beliefs, policies, and norms and is composed of artifacts (visible structures), espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions (beliefs, thoughts, and feelings) (Short & Greer, 1997). Norms include protecting the mission of the group, critically analyzing strengths and weaknesses, supporting continuous improvement, and actively participating in decision-making at all levels (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005).

School climate, on the other hand, consists of the more observable aspects of the school environment (Fiore, 2001). Much like school culture, school climate is an interaction of factors that create a network of support that allows school members to teach and learn at optimal levels (Freiberg, 1998). As a quality-of-life indicator for school professionals, school climate has been referred akin to atmosphere, ambience, and overall tone (Dunn & Harris, 1998).

While these constructs are linked to one another, climate represents the current reality of a school, and culture, its history. Each school has its own culture that shapes the

climate of the building and sends a message to teachers and students about what is important in that environment (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). "*Climate* emphasizes the feeling and contemporary tone of the school, the feeling of the relationships, and the morale of the place. We believe that the term *culture* best denotes the complex elements of values, traditions, languages, and purpose somewhat better...Culture exists in the deeper elements of a school" (Peterson & Deal, 2002, p. 9). Fiore (2001) further elaborated on this notion stating that climate reflects one fact of personality and self-image of the school, while at the deepest levels, culture represents strongly held beliefs, values, and assumptions of a group. As a dynamic construct, climate is influenced by the needs and desires of the group that result in the norms of day-to-day behavior and impact daily decisions. Given its observable quality, school climate was the variable of interest in the current study.

Measurement of school climate. Measurement of school climate can focus on several factors within the school. According to Creemers and Reezigt (1999), there are four school-level climate variables: (1) the physical environment of the building, (2) the social systems, (3) the orderly school environment, and (4) the expectations about teacher behavior and student outcomes. In reviewing over 200 studies on school climate, Anderson (1982) defined climate as dealing with the quality within an organization. Using Tagiuri's (1968) taxonomy of climate-related terms as the basis for her literature review, variables within a school environment were organized along ecological (e.g., material/physical), milieu (e.g., characteristics of individuals in the school), social system (e.g., patterns or rules), and cultural (e.g., belief systems and values) categories.

Van Horn (2003), however, emphasized the unit of theory measurement dilemma that can arise when investigating school climate. Two divergent schools of thought exist regarding the 'location' of school climate: within the school or in the perceptions of participants of the school. School climate has been used as both an organizational and individual level variable. In the individual level view, "there is no property of the organization that could be called its climate, instead the climate will be different for each participant in the organization based on personal characteristics and perceptions of the organization" (Van Horn, 2003, p. 1003). Dunn and Harris (1998) pointed to the agreement in the literature that climate involves a group phenomenon that centers on a consensus in perception, encompassing psychological, social, and physical characteristics of the school environment.

In his study, Van Horn (2003) found that the organizational-level theory had stronger support when investigating the influence of climate on student outcomes, as individual ratings did not have significant relationships to outcomes. In this study, school climate was investigated as an individual level variable, focusing on the staff perceptions of the organization. The Order, Leadership, Environment, Instruction, and Expectations subscales of the *School Climate Inventory* (*SCI*; The Center for Research in Educational Policy, 2002) were used to measure school climate.

Impact of school climate on school personnel. Much of the literature on school climate has emphasized its direct impact on student success or development (e.g., Dunn & Harris, 1998; Loukas & Robinson, 2004; Strahan, Carlone, Horn, Dallas, & Ware, 2003). However, it is equally important to investigate the impact of school climate on the professional quality of life of school personnel. The school's climate has an effect on the

adults who work there, which inevitably will influence the academic success of the students (Pepper & Thomas, 2002). The climate of a school has been found to have an influence on teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and job satisfaction, as well as on whether new innovations are successfully implemented (Gittlesohn et al., 2003). A culture valuing professionalism for teachers promotes a climate of collaboration where they work together by providing mutual support, offering constructive feedback, developing common goals, and setting realistic limits of what they can mutually achieve (Pepper & Thomas, 2002).

A collegial environment impacts teachers' morale, happiness, and satisfaction. A collegial school climate is one in which teachers are able to work well with one another, work well with administrators, manage conflict, and match their educational strengths and preferences with an appropriate school (Martinez, 2004). The research on effective schools pointed to collegiality and cooperation among teachers as vital aspects of the culture (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). In schools where collegiality is the standard, Little (1982) found that teachers frequently consult about teaching, jointly plan and evaluate teaching materials, and teach each other the craft of teaching. Fullan (2003) articulated the need for the development of collaborative learning communities to sustain educational change, stating "one of the interesting by-products of engaging learning communities is that they become more proactive with parents and the public. The dynamic, I think, is that when teachers are working alone, not learning together, they are not as confident about what they are doing" (p. 43). Teachers who lack the confidence to explain themselves take fewer risks and collaborate less. However, professional learning

communities build confidence and competence, bringing teachers and principals to the realization that they can only be effective as partners.

School reform efforts related to teachers have begun to focus on enhancing teacher involvement in decision making, developing their sense of career development, and attaining a quality of work life (Conley & Muncey, 1999). Former methods for promoting school change were not driven by the teachers and received little support from teachers because of their lack of commitment to these agendas (Cherniss, 1997). Collaborative work and the pursuit of continuous improvement need to become part of the norms and climate of the school (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Short and Greer (1997) noted the centrality of collegial relationships in schools that are identified as unusually effective, as well as the importance of collegiality to each school's climate. Cooperation among school personnel is necessary for promoting and institutionalizing change efforts. As such, the participants of this study included all professional personnel responsible for student success, not only teachers, in order to provide a more comprehensive portrayal of school climate.

Social Capital

Interest in social capital was catalyzed by the work of Bordieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (1993), and has been applied in the fields of sociology, economics, civics, and education. Generically speaking, capital is a resource that is acquired, accumulated, and of value (Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003). Different from physical and human capital, which emphasize resources and skills/education respectively, social capital is concerned with relationships between individuals and groups (Hooghe & Stolle, 2003). Two important forms of social capital are (1) the potential for the information that

is inherent in social relationships and (2) the establishment of norms that either encourage positive actions or deter negative ones (Coleman, 1988).

"Social capital can be defined as *resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions.* By this definition, the notion of social capital contains three ingredients: resources imbedded in a social structure; accessibility to such social resources by individuals; and use or mobilization of such social resources by individuals in purposive actions" (Lin, 2001a, p. 12). It refers to connections among individuals, such as social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise out of them (Putnam, 2000). Social capital relates to the norms and social relations that enable people to coordinate action to achieve desired goals (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). It refers to features of social organizations that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits. Stolle (2003) conceptualized social capital as "a societal resource that links citizens to each other and enables them to pursue their common objectives more effectively. It taps the potential willingness of citizens to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavors collectively" (p. 19).

Pooley, Cohen, and Pike (2005) content analyzed multiple definitions of social capital. Their study resulted in the identification of a concept that integrated three themes: the relationships between individuals and groups, the composition of networks (e.g., interaction, structure, density), and the competencies to interact effectively. They referred to social capital commonly as the 'glue' that holds groups together; without this 'glue', people are merely a collection of individuals. In the current study, social capital for school professional personnel was measured by the Involvement and Collaboration subscales of the *SCI.*

Conditions of social capital. The concept of social capital at a group level focuses on how groups develop and maintain social capital as a collective asset and how such an asset enhances group members' life chances. The premise behind this notion is that people invest in social relations with others with an expectation of a return on that investment (Lin, 2001a). Whether capital is an investment depends on the return for a specific individual or group. It is defined by its function. Coleman (1988) envisaged social capital not as a single entity, but as a variety of different entities incorporating two common elements: all consist of some aspect of social structures and facilitate certain actions of the people within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital makes possible the attainment of certain needs that, in its absence, would not be possible (Coleman, 1988).

In the same vein as Coleman (1988) and Lin (2001a), Herreros (2004) argued that social capital is not merely the presence of trust and networks. The true measure of social capital is the obligation of reciprocity that is derived from the relations of trust and the information that is gained from participation in social networks. Two conditions are necessary for this reciprocity: (1) that the trustee has goodwill and (2) that he/she will be influenced by the fact that they are trusted. The responses that are derived from the trusting relationships and development of networks are the critical drivers to the benefits of social capital.

Social capital can be both within and between groups. MacGillivray and Walker (2000) developed a framework that split social capital pragmatically into informal and formal social capital—the first about 'us' and the second about 'them.' Informal social capital can be conceptualized as trust in individuals within the group through norms,

reciprocity, and connections. Formal social capital is conceptualized as trust in organizations through community involvement, networks, and agency partnerships outside of the group. In this way, social capital can be either a bonding or bridging experience. Bonding focuses on internal ties for the collective of the group, while bridging is concerned with examining ways to utilize links with other social groups (Taylor, Jones, & Boles, 2004). Bridging can work to instill tolerance and acceptance, and also reaches out to benefit both the group and society/community (Putnam, 2000).

Similarly, Granovetter (1973) described the notion of strong and weak ties. The strength of ties is defined in terms of the frequency and closeness of the individuals. While strong ties are important for group accomplishments, weak ties may be more useful for the accomplishment of goals because they tap into a larger body of resources beyond the immediate group. Relying on the strong ties of a group will only give access to a limited number of contacts, while weak ties or acquaintances are more likely to be able to open members up to new opportunities to find a solution or resolve.

Using social capital in school reform. In this study, social capital was conceptualized as one of the major components of a school's social structure, as it has increasingly been proposed as a solution to persistent educational and social problems (Dika & Singh, 2002). In the present study, social capital was investigated both as an internal resource (collaboration) and a means to form external partnerships to bring about better outcomes for students. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) identified a school's composition, resources, and climate as indicators of social capital and stimulus to student performance. These positive school conditions included high teacher expectations for students, teacher interest in the welfare of students, students perceiving teachers as caring

role models, and parent involvement in school activities. Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell (1997) categorized effective schools as those with high levels of teacher-teacher and teacher-principal collaboration, as well as extensive commitments to staff development. Fullan (2002) posited the need to invest in the social and moral environment of the school as a means to develop "resources to close the achievement gap between the high and low performers, to develop all schools in the system, and to connect schools to the strength of democracy in society" (p. 19).

Warren (2005) highlighted the positive outcomes for developing strong social capital among the stakeholders of the school system. Teachers and principals who deepen their social capital build trust within each other, within the community for their efforts, and are able to develop a common vision for school improvement. Social relationships among adult stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators) result in a protective network for students and a greater ability to coordinate educational activities. Strong social capital within a school can then be used to branch out to other agencies and institutions to widen the resources available for reaching educational goals.

Programs that demonstrate positive outcomes for graduates are those that are well connected to institutions and agencies beyond the school and coordinate efforts across different groups and departments within the school (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Using social capital resources to form partnerships is consistent with major areas of change suggested in *No Child Left Behind* in relation to allowing for parental controls and expanding local control and flexibility (Martinez, 2004). Parent involvement and interagency collaboration have also been cited as best practices for education and the transition of students (Benz, Lindstrom, & Halpern, 1995; Edmondson & Cain, 2002;

Israel & Beaulieu, 2004; Kohler, 1993; Luecking & Certo, 2003; Nuehring & Sitlington, 2003; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997).

The development of multiple lines of social capital is vitally important to students with disabilities. Benz and colleagues (1995) posited the dual reasons for building partnerships between schools and the community as (a) securing the community resources needed to help *an individual student* accomplish transition goals and (b) improving the *capacity of schools and communities* to deliver services and provide resources to enhance the transition of *all students*. The fostering of relationships between schools and adult service providers has been emphasized as crucial to the transition process (Edmondson & Cain, 2003; Garret, Huff, & Sheppard-Jones, 2002; Harley, Tice, & Kaplan, 2001). In a study of partnerships between vocational rehabilitation counselors and special education administrators, Garrett and colleagues (2002) found that individuals with more positive perceptions of their community were more likely to partner with one another. Building capacity within the community to serve basic needs will create conditions where individuals with disabilities will then be able to make choices (Lehmann, Deniston, Tobin, & Howard, 1996).

Regardless of the physical and human capital resources people have, when people have ties to other people and develop trust in one another, they are better able to achieve collective results (Warren, 2005). Successful schools deal with problems similar to other schools, but they are able to cope more effectively (Fullan & Miles, 1992). These deeper coping strategies are related to building personal capacity and structural redesign. Literature on systems change suggests guiding principles for capacity building efforts as: (1) active participation of diverse stakeholders, (2) viewing change as a process and not

an event, and (3) partnerships that are supported by a larger structure that sustains and validates effort and facilitates networking among communities to broaden the impact of capacity (Benz et al., 1995).

The use of social capital as a panacea for poor achievement and the NCLB standards is not without risks. Dika and Singh (2002) criticized that much of the conceptualization of social capital is vague and fear that using it as a framework to explain the effects of inequality in educational outcomes will add another 'thing' that unsuccessful individuals lack. Although, schools with equal resources may not be as effective as one another because of the capacity of individuals within those organizations to efficiently use the resources (Maehr & Midgley, 1996). Therefore, investment in social capital is paramount to mobilizing individuals. To facilitate the accumulation of capital, the organization must give people the time and space to connect, develop trust, communicate effectively, and enjoy the rewards of participation. Cohen and Prushak (2001) captured the marshalling force of social capital:

> Social capital bridges the space between people. Its characteristic elements and indicators include high levels of trust, robust personal networks and vibrant communities, shared understandings, and a sense of equitable participation in a joint enterprise—all the things that draw individuals together into a group. This kind of connection supports collaboration, commitment, ready access to knowledge and talent, and coherent organizational behavior. (p. 4)

Empowerment

Throughout the literature, there is a lack of an agreed upon operational definition of empowerment (Herrenkohl et al., 1999). Empowerment has interchangeably been

referred to as a theory, plan of action, goal, framework, and process (McWhirter, 1991). The model of empowerment used as the conceptual framework in this study is Spreitzer's (1997) model, which was adapted from Thomas and Velthouse (1990), and includes the components of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.

The construct of empowerment shares attributes with similar concepts, such as self-determination, self-efficacy, and autonomy. At times, these terms are used synonymously and, at other times, they are used to describe one another. McWhirter (1991) distinguished among the concepts of empowerment, autonomy, and self-efficacy:

> Empowerment refers to a comprehensive process affecting not just the individual but the individual in relation to others, to the community, and to society. Although increased autonomy is certainly one aspect of empowerment, the term is not broad enough to capture the relational aspect...Efficacy is a cognitive appraisal of performance capabilities; empowerment is a global process involving behavioral and cognitive components. (p. 224)

Szymanski (1994) specified the features of empowerment as self-control, expanded choices, independence or interdependence, authority, and self-determination. An expansion of the concept of empowerment, from multiple fields, will elucidate the concept further and underscore its applicability to the current study.

Theories of empowerment. The fields of organizational development, counseling, psychology, disability rights, rehabilitation counseling, and education have all provided voice to the dialogue on empowerment. In an attempt to operationalize the concept of employee empowerment, Herrenkohl and colleagues (1999) proposed empowerment as "a set of dimensions that characterize an environment's interaction with persons in it so

as to encourage their taking initiative to improve process and to take action" (p. 375). These writers hypothesized that the four dimensions of shared vision, supportive organizational structure and governance, institutional recognition, and knowledge and learning would be integral components of empowerment, but found that only the first three components were retained following their analysis. Spreitzer and colleagues (1999) linked psychological empowerment to change-oriented leadership, relating it with the qualities of innovativeness, upward influence, and inspiration of subordinates.

In the counseling realm, empowerment has become analogous to an attitude involving self-esteem and competence (Emener, 1991), the ability to cope (McWhirter, 1991), intentionality or goal-directed behavior (Richardson, 2000), and a way to construct political, economic, psychological, and social environments (Savage, Harley, & Nowak, 2005). Bolton and Brookings (1996) proposed a multifaceted definition of empowerment for people with disabilities, which consisted of 20 characteristics such as assertive, collaborative, goal-directed, interdependent, self-discovering, and socially responsible. Dunst (1991), as cited in Short and Rinehart (1992), suggested that empowerment consists of enabling experiences, provided within an organization that fosters autonomy, choice, control, and responsibility, that allow the individual to demonstrate competencies as well as learn new skills.

Kosciulek (1999) developed the consumer-directed theory of empowerment (CDTE) for use in the field of rehabilitation counseling. The theoretical constructs related to this theory include consumer-direction, community integration, and empowerment, with an outcome construct of quality of life. Propositions of the CDTE are offered as a basis for disability policy development, service delivery and program evaluation, and

rehabilitation research. These propositions are: (1) consumer direction has a positive effect on community integration, (2) consumer direction has a positive effect on empowerment, (3) community integration has a positive effect on empowerment, (4) community integration mediates the relation between consumer direction and empowerment, and (5) empowerment has a positive effect on quality of life. Based on these propositions, Kosciulek and Merz (2001) tested the hypothetical structural model of the CDTE using participants from a community rehabilitation program for consumers with disabilities (n = 159). Using structural equation modeling, the relationships of consumer direction, empowerment, and quality of life were retained in the model (propositions 1, 2, & 5); however, community integration was not found to have a mediating relationship on empowerment, but rather a direct relationship to quality of life.

Most relevant to the current study is the conceptualization of empowerment in the school setting. Following the realization in the 1990's that a bottom-up approach would be more beneficial for school reform (Palestini, 2000), empowerment of teachers, administrators, and students has been seen as integral to school improvement (Short & Rinehard, 1992). Short and Greer (1997) acknowledged empowerment for teachers as the process that allows school participants to develop the competence to take charge of their growth and resolve personal problems. Empowered individuals believe they have the skills and knowledge to act in situations and improve them. Palestini (2000) defined empowerment in schools as "a deliberate effort to provide principals and teachers with the room, right, responsibility, and resources to make sensible decisions and informed professional judgments that reflect their circumstances" (p. 78).

Research involving empowerment. As a result of its relevance to many fields of

study, empowerment has been used as a variable of interest in a number of studies. The overriding use of the construct was as a mediator or explanatory condition for outcomes. In Spreitzer's (1997) model, which is the conceptual framework for the current study, empowerment is used as a mediating variable. The following literature explicates the use of empowerment as a study variable within several disciplines.

Cherniss (1995) conducted a longitudinal, qualitative study to understand the factors within careers and work environments that resulted in personnel retention and burnout. Initial interviews with professionals (n = 26) from human service fields (e.g., teachers, nurses, therapists) were conducted within their first year of employment and 12 years later. Results of this study pointed to the multidimensional aspects of empowerment. Self-efficacy was highly related to the professionals' compassion and openness to clients because of growing self-confidence. As professionals felt better about themselves, they felt better about their clients/students. Self-confidence led to greater effectiveness, which strengthened personal confidence. Lack of collegiality within the environment led to the inability to tolerate frustration and disappointment. Professionals were more likely to find work with difficult clients rewarding if they were in a supportive environment. Two of the lessons that came out of this study were that administrators (1) need to plan for better working environments to provide the support that prevents burnout and (2) give professionals a greater role in the planning of change. A combination of autonomy and support led to better career adjustment for professionals through freedom from bureaucracy and role conflicts, administrative support and feedback, and stimulating and congenial colleagues.

Maton and Salem (1995) used a multiple case study method to examine the characteristics of empowering communities. Data from three settings were used as case studies, including a religious fellowship group, a mutual help organization for individuals with mental illness, and a scholarship program for African American college students. Salient characteristics across all settings were a group-based belief system, opportunity role structures, support systems, and leadership. The group-based belief system was characterized as inspiring of growth toward goals, based on the capacity and strength of its members, and based beyond the self to the entire group or mission. For each study, the opportunity role structure provided a large number of multi-level roles for members, requiring a varying level of skill and responsibility, as well as the opportunity to develop and use a variety of skills. A support system was identified in each study that contributes to the members' quality of life. The support systems were described as encompassing, peer-based, and providing a sense of community. Finally, leadership was defined as a motivating and inspirational force. Leaders had a clear vision, were talented and skilled, shared responsibilities with members, and were committed to the growth of members and the organization. The characteristics identified as common within these settings were wholly consistent with extant literature on empowering organizations.

The field of education has yielded variable results with respect to the impact and relationship of empowerment to other constructs. Husband and Short (1994) found that the empowerment of teachers was impacted by the organizational structure for personnel. Using the *School Participant Empowerment Scale* (*SPES*), the impact of working in interdisciplinary teams on empowerment was assessed from a sample of 309 middle school teachers (155 interdisciplinary teamed and 154 departmentally organized). The

study revealed that those teachers on the interdisciplinary teams were more significantly empowered on all six factors of teacher empowerment than their reference group. The *SPES* was used to measure empowerment in this study, both in relation to school social structure and to explore the four components of empowerment postulated in Spreitzer's (1997) model.

Martin, Crossland, and Johnson (2001) investigated the connection among teacher empowerment, teachers' sense of responsibility, and student success. A sample of 271 classroom teachers from small and mid-sized school districts completed a measure of responsibility for student achievement and the *SPES*. Using correlational analysis, relationships were investigated between teachers' perceived empowerment in the workplace, teachers' perceived levels of responsibility for student learning, and student achievement on standardized tests in reading and mathematics. A statistically significant relationship was found between level of empowerment and sense of responsibility for student success, although a relationship was not found for sense of responsibility for student negative outcomes. No significant relationship was found between students' achievement and levels of empowerment. The authors reported that the data indicated that teacher empowerment and sense of responsibility for student outcomes were important contributors to school climate and increased teacher efficacy, but only secondarily to student achievement.

Similar to the proposed study, Sweetland and Hoy (2000) and Sweetland (2001) were interested in the relationships among the organizational aspects of schools and the empowerment of professional staff. Sweetland and Hoy (2000) used responses from middle school teachers (n = 2,741) to investigate the relationship among school climate,

teacher empowerment, organizational effectiveness, and student achievement. Climate variables of collegial leadership and academic press (i.e., stress on academics, resource support, principal influence) were the strongest predictors of teacher empowerment. The climate variable of environmental press, categorized as strong pressure from parents and the community to change the school, was not sufficient to empower teachers. These researchers concluded that a school climate that is open, collegial, professional, and focused on student achievement provides an atmosphere for productive teacher empowerment. Results from the study indicated that teacher empowerment is related to higher levels of effectiveness and was a significant independent predictor of student achievement in math and reading. These authors suggested that future research in this vein should utilize a multidimensional and contextual measure of empowerment, rather than a global measure, and that the ability for teachers to act in empowered ways should be analyzed.

Sweetland (2001) investigated the interrelationships among an enabling school structure, professional authenticity, and teacher sense of power. This author hypothesized that more enabling school structures would lead to more authenticity in teacher relationships among peers and between principals and teachers, as well as a greater sense of power. Strong correlation among an enabling environment, authenticity, and sense of power pointed to enabling structures facilitating authentic interaction among school personnel. Using a multiple regression, authenticity and sense of power explained 71% of the variance of enabling structure. To further the literature on empowerment in schools, the current study investigated sense of empowerment among school personnel in relation

to the environmental and social conditions of the school. To this end, the following section will discuss the literature related to teacher empowerment.

Teacher empowerment. Teacher empowerment has been a growing concept within education. Melenyzer (1990) identified teacher empowerment as the opportunity and confidence to act upon ideas and influence one's professional performance. Goyne, Padgett, and Rowicki (1999) proposed that empowerment be viewed as a process, rather than an outcome, that requires leaders to relinquish some power to create an environment that fosters collaboration. Two primary causes of barriers to empowerment relate to lack of interest and giving responsibility with no power. For teachers to become involved, they must feel that the issue is relevant and worth their effort. In addition, teachers must be given the power to carry out their plans, once they have been charged with the responsibility for making them. The three keys to empowerment, identified by Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph (1996), are (1) share information with everyone; (2) replace the old hierarchy with self-directed teams; and (3) create autonomy through boundaries. The message from leadership in empowering schools needs to be that empowerment and responsibility are inseparable.

Contemporary school reform efforts have recognized that teachers should be involved in the change process. With mounting expectations and standards, teachers need to be more creative and productive to prepare students for the changing demands of the workforce (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Considering teacher empowerment from a social or political agenda, Prawat (1991) stated that the goal is to enhance teachers' ability to deal with oppression in schools and overcome the tendency to hold back or yield to those in positions of authority. Empowerment should be viewed from a positive, active approach

to freedom that views freedom as an achievement, rather than a right. The key to empowerment, from this stance, is to encourage teachers to be open to creative and effective ways of constructing the classroom and school environments.

Prawat (1991) described teacher empowerment as an enculturation process, although the teacher has a reciprocal effect on the environment and the community. From a political perspective, the keys to empowerment include becoming aware of how power is arranged in the environment and then finding a way to create a supportive environment where teachers can find and use their own voice. "A commitment to self is empowering for teachers only when it takes the form of a commitment to self *as professional*" (Prawat, 1991, p. 752). Commitment to others is an important aspect to teachers' personal empowerment, especially in developing a voice and sense of self.

Empowering settings. Teacher empowerment can only be realized in an empowering setting. Miles (1965) identified ten characteristics of healthy organizations: clear goals accepted by the participants, adequate communication that flows in all directions and is distortion free, equalized influence among all players in the organization, human resources used effectively, clear vision concerning what the organization is about, high morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptability, and problem-solving strategies and procedures. Themes evident in empowering environments include trust, communication, structures for involvement, and risk taking (Short & Rinehard, 1992).

Cherniss (1997) defined the following factors as contributing to an empowering setting: (1) role clarity, (2) meaningful roles, (3) self-efficacy, (4) self-determination, (5) impact, (6) political support, (7) socio-emotional support, (8) access to strategic

information, (9) access to resources, (10) leadership that is both inspiring and shared, and (11) a work unit culture that values members and their potential to make important contributions. Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) delineated the organizational factors that are influential in relation to a teacher's commitment to work. These included performance efficacy, psychic rewards (learning about the positive results of one's efforts), task autonomy and discretion (exercise judgment and be a causal agent), learning opportunities, school management of student behavior (allows more time for the teacher to teach), and buffering by principals.

Empowerment in the school setting. Empowering schools set the stage for school personnel to become actively involved in the movement to reform schools and facilitate better outcomes for students. In describing reform efforts in England, Fullan (2003) reported that as students' scores on standardized tests began to rise, the morale of teachers and principals declined because the working conditions did not adapt to allow them to become fully engaged in the change process. NCLB's focus on achievement creates a legitimate concern for the impact it will have on the morale of school personnel and overall working conditions within the school. Empowered schools must create opportunities for competence to be developed and displayed (Short & Greer, 1997). Teachers need to be welcomed to the table to offer solutions to meet the standards set forth by *No Child Left Behind* and demonstrate pride in their schools. Casas (1990, as cited in McWhirter, 1991) postulated that problem analysis within a school will be empowering when responsibility for the problem is shared among individuals, the system, and society, blame is not assigned to an individual, and each stakeholder group is accountable for contribution to solutions.

Through teacher empowerment and the development of active, empowering school environments, teachers will be willing to assume this role of change-oriented leader. Empowered individuals do not passively wait for the work environment to provide direction. They take a proactive approach toward shaping their environment (Spreitzer, de Janasz, & Quinn, 1999). Prawat (1991) contended that commitment to the workplace be considered a more encompassing type of outcome variable because, as a hallmark of organizational success in education, it has become the criterion of choice in the evaluation of education reform strategies.

CHAPTER 3

Method

Participants

The population of interest in this study was public school district personnel. The sample for this study was drawn from the Haslett, Michigan School District. The Haslett School District was selected because it was one of three school districts that participated in a learning community related to self-determination sponsored by the Ingham Intermediate School District (IISD) in 2004. The 3 districts were selected for inclusion in the learning community because self-determination was identified by these districts as an important area of development for transition planning.

During the 2004-2005 school year, a group of school professionals, including six Haslett School District teachers and counselors, met in a group coordinated by Jeanne Tomlinson, Transition Coordinator for the IISD, and facilitated by Dr. Sharon Field and Ms. Kay Cornell of the Center for Self-Determination and Transition at Wayne State University (Detroit, MI). The group met six times over the course of the school year to accomplish the following:

- Become oriented to the self-determination concept and the *Steps to Self-Determination* (Field & Hoffman, 1996) curriculum,
- Prepare for the implementation of self-determination activities,
- Reflect on the implementation of the curriculum,
- Discuss resources necessary for continuation of the program, and
- Brainstorm for the possibility of a K-12 self-determination continuum within each school district.

While the Haslett School District was selected due to its participation in the self-determination learning community, no attempt was made in the present study to measure the efficacy of the implementation of the self-determination curriculum.

In this study, participant inclusion criteria were that staff be employed in a professional role (i.e., general education teacher, special education teacher, counselor, administrator, paraprofessional) and have completed at least two years of post-secondary education. Of the district personnel who completed a survey (n = 102), 100 participants met these inclusion criteria. Data from two additional participants were excluded because one side of one of the study measures, the *School Climate Inventory (SCI)*, was not completed. Thus, the total potential available sample for this study was 98. Based on estimates provided by the Assistant Superintendent, the total potential population that could be sampled, based on inclusion criteria, was approximately 200 staff. The sample participating in the current study represented approximately 50% of the entire population available.

A *Participant Demographic Questionnaire*, which can be found in Appendix A, was used to collect demographic information from participants. The participants were comprised mostly of females (71.4%) and all but 2 respondents were Caucasian. The average age of participants was 43.7 years (Range = 21-64). Participants had a mean of 15.7 years of education and were employed an average of 9.8 years at their current school. Six participants reported an education level below a Bachelor's degree, 35 a Bachelor's degree, 52 a Master's degree, and 4 a degree beyond a Master's. The greatest proportion of respondents were general education teachers (59.2%), followed by paraprofessionals (12.2%), special education teachers (11.2%), counselors/therapists

Table 1

Participant Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Freq	%[a]	M	SD	Range
Gender					
Female	70	71.4			
Male	26	26.5			
Race					
Caucasian	94	95.9			
American Indian	1	1.0			
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	1.0			
Level of Education					
Some college, no degree	4	4.1			
Associate's degree	2	2.0			
Bachelor's degree	35	35.7			
Master's degree	52	53.1			
Degree beyond Master's	4	4.1			
Position					
Administrator	3	3.1			
General Education Teacher	58	59.2			
Special Education Teacher	11	11.2			
Therapist/Counselor	7	7.1			
Paraprofessional	12	12.2			
Other	6	6.1			
Level of School					
Elementary	40	40.8			
Middle	24	24.5			
High	34	34.7			
Age	95		43.7	10.8	21-64
Years in Education Field	96		15.7	9.5	1-37
Years at Current School	96		9.8	8.0	1-35

[a] Percentages may not equal 100% due to omitted data.

(7.1%), other (6.1%), and administrators (3.1%). Participants represented the three school levels as follows: elementary school (40.8%), middle school (24.5%), and high school (34.7%). Table 1 contains detailed information regarding participant demographic characteristics.

Variables and Instruments

Social structure. The social structure of a school forms its contemporary reality and the necessary preconditions for a sense of empowerment among teachers. The overall tone of the school and the image that is perceived by others, both inside and outside of the school, has a direct impact on the capacity that can be generated through connections to staff, parents, students, and the community. The development of capital and resources should further strengthen the climate and image of the school. For the purposes of this study, social structure, in relation to a school setting, was conceptually defined as school climate and social capital.

Climate describes the personality of an organization and provides a frame of reference for individuals to shape behaviors and attitudes (Spreitzer, 1996). School climate is the readily observable characteristics of the school, while school culture is the deeper, supporting structure upon which the climate rests (Fiore, 2001). Because of this observable quality, the climate of a school was the variable of interest in this study as opposed to culture, although authors sometimes use the terms interchangeably (Van Houtte, 2005). Climate emphasizes the feeling and tone of the school, the mood of relationships and staff morale, and the overall personality of the school (Fiore, 2001; Peterson & Deal, 2002).

The term social capital was first used to describe the tangible assets that count the most in the daily lives of people, including goodwill, fellowship, and social intercourse among people (Pooley et al., 2005). Social capital has been proposed to explain cooperation and trust within communities (Lin, 2001a, 2001b). Putnam (1993) defined social capital as the "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action" (p. 167). School social capital can be identified through its composition, resources, and climate (Israel & Beaulieu, 2004).

The *School Climate Inventory* (*SCI*; The Center for Research in Educational Policy, 2002) was used to measure the concept of social structure by operationally defining school climate and social capital. The *SCI* assesses the perceptions and opinions of school personnel. The *SCI* can be used to monitor and manage educational change initiatives by evaluating climate factors that either limit or bolster school effectiveness. The *SCI* consists of seven dimensions that are linked with factors associated with effective school organizational climates. Items on this 49-item measure (seven items per dimension) are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement; 5 = strong agreement). A mean score is calculated for each of the following seven instrument dimensions. Internal consistency reliability coefficients are provided in parentheses.

1. Order: the extent to which the environment is ordered and appropriate student behaviors are present (α=.83).
2. Leadership: the extent to which the administration provides instructional leadership (α=.83).
3. Environment: the extent to which positive learning environments exist (α=.81).

4. Involvement: the extent to which parents and the community are involved in the school (α=.76).
5. Instruction: the extent to which the instructional program is well developed and implemented (α = .75).
6. Expectations: the extent to which students are expected to learn and be responsible (α=.73).
7. Collaboration: the extent to which the administration, faculty, and students cooperate and participate in problem solving (α=.74).

School climate was operationally defined by the mean scores on the Order, Leadership, Environment, Instruction, and Expectations dimensions. Social capital was operationally defined by the mean scores on the Involvement and Collaboration dimensions. The *SCI* was used with permission of The Center for Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis.

Sense of empowerment. According to Prawat (1991), keys to empowerment include becoming aware of the structure of power in the environment and then finding a way to create a supportive environment where teachers can find and use their own voice. The organization of the school may negatively affect teacher empowerment, in that bureaucratic schools can deny autonomy and control (Husband & Short, 1994). Spreitzer (1996) suggested that empowerment of individuals within an organization has a reciprocal, although not equally significant, effect on the social structure of the organization. In the current study, sense of empowerment was theoretically defined as self-determination, competence, meaning, and impact, based on Spreitzer's (1997) model of individual empowerment in organizations. In this study, sense of empowerment was

operationally defined by the *School Participant Empowerment Scale* (*SPES*; Short & Rinehart, 1992). Permission to use the *SPES* was granted by the first author.

The *SPES* was "designed to assess several conceptually derived dimensions, or components, of empowerment" (Short & Rinehart, 1992, p. 953). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Mean scores are calculated for each of six factor scales; with higher mean scale scores indicating greater empowerment. The six dimensions, or factor scales, of the *SPES* are listed and defined below. Internal consistency reliability coefficients are provided in parentheses.

1. Decision Making (10 items): refers to the participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work (α=.89).
2. Professional Growth (6 items): refers to teachers' perceptions that their school provides them with opportunities to grow and develop as a professional, learn continuously, and expand one's skills (α=.83).
3. Status (6 items): refers to the teacher's sense of esteem ascribed by others to the position of teacher (α=.86).
4. Self-Efficacy (6 items): refers to teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can affect change in student learning (α=.84).
5. Autonomy (4 items): refers to teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life (α=.81).
6. Impact (6 items): refers to teachers' perceptions that they have an effect and influence on school life (α=.82).

Procedure

A request to conduct a research study was submitted to the Haslett School District. The Assistant Superintendent of the Haslett School District provided approval for the conduct of this study. Following receipt of a letter from the MSU Institutional Review Board indicating that this study was exempt from review for the use of human subjects in research (see Appendix B), the investigator contacted the principal of each of the six Haslett School District schools to arrange for a time to collect data from staff at their school. In addition, recruitment flyers were distributed to potential participants with the date and time for data collection. To collect study data, the investigator spent two to six hours of a school day in the staff lounge at each school. Data were collected across a three-week time period.

On the day of data collection at each site, the demographic questionnaire, *SCI*, and *SPES* were administered to school personnel in an individual format. A verbal description of the study and written letter of informed consent (see Appendix C) were provided to each participant prior to his or her completion of study questionnaires. Informed consent was implied from each participant who completed and returned study questionnaires. All study packets were sealed following completion and remained sealed until data entry. All demographic information and questionnaire responses were entered into the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 14.0 for Windows* (SPSS, 2005) for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Canonical correlation analysis was used to answer *Research Question 1*: What is the relationship between school social structure and teacher empowerment? Canonical

correlation was selected because it allows the researcher to investigate the simultaneous relationship between sets of variables (Polit, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2000). In this analysis, the purpose was to evaluate the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment. The social structure criterion variables were measured via subscales of the *SCI*, while the empowerment predictor variables were measured via subscales of the *SPES*. Figure 3 illustrates the predictor and criterion variables used in the canonical correlation analysis. Using guidelines developed by Cohen (1988) and Lipsey (1990), an a priori statistical power analysis when using canonical analysis (i.e., multiple correlation) indicated that under the conditions of a fixed alpha level of 0.05, seven predictor variables, and assuming an anticipated small to medium effect size, that a sample size of approximately 90 was required to obtain a desired statistical power level of 0.80.

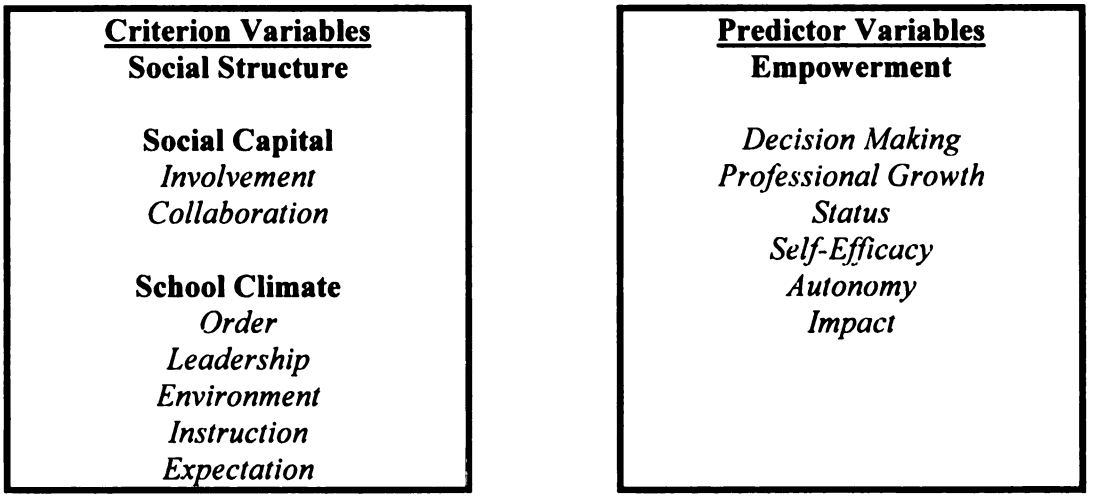

Figure 3: Variable Sets for Canonical Correlation

To answer the second research question, the hypothesized relationship among the components of sense of empowerment was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Figure 4 illustrates the measurement model used to test the relationship among the

components of sense of empowerment. *SPES* subscale mean scores were used to measure each of the predictor variables and the criterion variable.

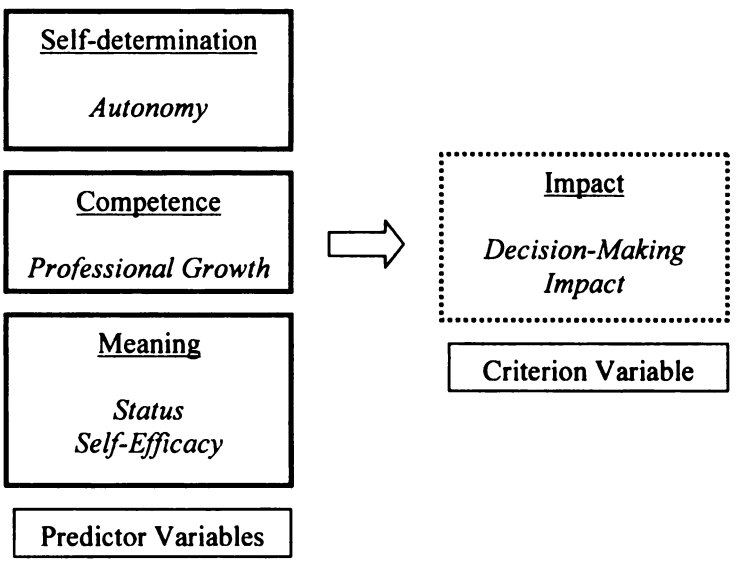

Figure 4: Measurement Model for Regression using *SPES* Subscales

As shown in Figure 4, for the Meaning and Impact variables, two subscale mean scores were combined to yield a single score for each of these variables. Although the conceptual framework in Figure 2 (pg. 11) hypothesizes a temporal, cyclical effect, only the general relationship of the predictor variables to the criterion variable of Impact will be assessed. A forward, sequential regression method was used to determine the inclusion order of the predictor variables, based on the order proposed in Figure 2. An a priori power analysis indicated that when using multiple regression with a fixed alpha level of 0.05, three predictor variables, and assuming an anticipated small to medium effect size, that a sample size of approximately 60 was required to obtain a desired statistical power level of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988; Lipsey, 1990).

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purposes of this investigation were to determine the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment and to explicate the relationship among the components of sense of empowerment. Prior to conducting the primary analyses related to each of the two research questions, descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were calculated to yield data to describe the variables in this study and examine interrelationships among the variables. Using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 14.0 for Windows* (SPSS, 2005), Research Question 1 (i.e., the relationship of social structure to empowerment) was addressed using canonical correlation analysis. SPSS also was used to conduct a multiple regression analysis to address Research Question 2 (i.e., the relationship among the components of sense of empowerment).

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analyses

Means, standard deviations, ranges, and internal consistency reliability estimates (i.e., Cronbach's alphas) for all study variables are presented in Table 2 and correlations among the variables are shown in Table 3. As illustrated in Table 2, the alpha levels for the study variables were similar to the alpha levels reported for the *School Climate Inventory* subscales (The Center for Research in Educational Policy, 2002). Similarly, alpha levels for the study variables were, for the most part, similar to the alpha levels reported for the *School Participant Empowerment Scale* subscales (Short & Rinehart, 1992). One study variable, *Autonomy*, had low to moderate internal consistency reliability (alpha = .65) and had an alpha level lower than the alpha of .81 previously reported by

Short and Rinehart (1992). As shown in Table 3, many statistically significant correlations were found to exist between the study variables.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	Range[a]	α
1. Collaboration	3.96	.56	1.86-5.00	.81
2. Expectation	4.12	.53	2.86-5.00	.80
3. Instruction	4.06	.51	2.86-5.00	.79
4. Involvement	3.92	.62	2.29-5.00	.77
5. Environment	4.16	.55	2.71-5.00	.83
6. Leadership	3.95	.67	2.14-5.00	.85
7. Order	3.78	.72	1.29-5.00	.85
8. Decision Making	3.72	.73	1.40-5.00	.85
9. Professional Growth	4.20	.63	1.67-5.00	.83
10. Status	4.46	.45	3.00-5.00	.77
11. Self-Efficacy	4.52	.53	1.67-5.00	.88
12. Autonomy	3.55	.76	1.00-5.00	.65
13. Impact	4.30	.56	2.33-5.00	.78

[a] Minimum to maximum.

Results in Relation to Research Question 1

The first research question of interest in this study was: What is the relationship between school social structure and teacher empowerment? The correlations and standardized canonical coefficients between school social structure and sense of empowerment, as well as the overall canonical correlation results, are presented in Table 4. Only one canonical variate emerged as significant in the relationship between these two sets of variables. The squared canonical correlation of the canonical variate (R_c^2), which represented the variance shared by the linear combination of the two sets of variables, was .53.

Table 3

Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Collaboration	--												
2. Expectation	.703**	--											
3. Instruction	.702**	.675**	--										
4. Involvement	.589**	.697**	.527**	--									
5. Environment	.785**	.674**	.676**	.448**	--								
6. Leadership	.793**	.607**	.609**	.519**	.805**	--							
7. Order	.578**	.768**	.609**	.638**	.592**	.517**	--						
8. Decision Making	.404**	.203	.225*	.026	.295**	.360**	.162	--					
9. Professional Growth	.639**	.519**	.536**	.313**	.599**	.605**	.401**	.627**	--				
10. Status	.489**	.447**	.497**	.311**	.472**	.397**	.370**	.562**	.699**	--			
11. Self-Efficacy	.411**	.393**	.375**	.248*	.399**	.281**	.275**	.390**	.571**	.728**	--		
12. Autonomy	.328**	.160	.312**	-.057	.287**	.335**	.176	.664**	.543**	.482**	.409**	--	
13. Impact	.404**	.303**	.365**	.089	.304**	.303**	.269**	.662**	.631**	.711**	.751**	.612**	--

**p < .01, *p < .05

Table 4

Canonical Analysis of School Social Structure and Sense of Empowerment Variables (n = 73)

Variable	First Variate Correlation	First Variate Canonical Coefficient
School Social Structure		
Involvement	.18	-.48
Collaboration	-.66	-.96
Order	-.14	-.63
Leadership	-.30	-.89
Environment	-.15	-.87
Instruction	.16	-.68
Expectation	-.12	-.71
Percentage of Variance[a]	58.01	
Redundancy of Predictor Variables	.31	
Sense of Empowerment		
Decision Making	-.18	-.59
Professional Growth	-.88	-.94
Status	-.24	-.77
Self-Efficacy	-.35	-.65
Autonomy	.02	-.43
Impact	.65	-.52
Percentage of Variance[a]	45.00	
Redundancy of Criterion Variables	.24	
Canonical Correlation	.73***	

NOTE: The correlations are standardized canonical coefficient; the canonical coefficients are the structure coefficients.

[a]Percentage of variance accounted for within the set by the canonical variate.

***$p < .001$

The standardized canonical coefficients reveal the ratio of importance of each of the original variables in calculating the canonical score for each canonical variate. For the criterion variables of social structure, Collaboration had a greater ratio of importance in calculating the canonical variate, whereas Professional Growth and Impact held the greatest importance for the sense of empowerment predictor variables.

The canonical (structure) coefficients illustrate how the original predictor variables load on each of the canonical variables for the criterion set in each of the canonical correlations. Absolute values of structure coefficients above .30 can be interpreted as important in defining the dimension, or characteristic, of the canonical variate (Polit, 1996). In the present study, one canonical variate emerged for interpretation at a significant level and all of the structure coefficients in this variate were above the .30 level.

The percentage of variance represents the amount of variance that each canonical variate extracts from the variables on its own side of the canonical equation. The variance explained by the criterion variables was 58%. The variance explained by the predictor variables was 45%. Of additional note to variance is the redundancy statistic. According to Levine (1977), the question canonical correlation analysis seeks to answer is not how much of the variance in a set is captured by a variate from that set, but rather how much of the variance of a set, as contained in the variate, can be accounted for by a variate from the other set. The redundancy from the predictor variables in the variance of the criterion variables was .31 and the redundancy from the criterion variables in the variance of the predictor variables was .24. Redundancy data thus indicate that low to moderate amounts

of variance in each of the sets of variables, as contained in the one variate, is accounted for by the variate for the other set.

The canonical correlation for the first canonical variate was .73. The square of the canonical correlation represents the variance shared by the specific linear combination of the two sets of variables. Thus, the results in this study indicate that 53% of the variance between the school social structure and empowerment variables is explained by the first canonical variate.

Results in Relation to Research Question 2

The second research question of interest in this study was: What is the relationship among the components of sense of empowerment? Sequential regression was used to determine the relationship of the components of sense of empowerment. The three predictor variables were forward-entered based on the theoretical relationship proposed in Figure 4 (p. 58). Subscales from the *SPES* were used to operationally define the variables in the proposed model. The Autonomy subscale was used to measure Self-Determination and the Professional Growth subscale was used to measure Competence. The Self-Efficacy and Status subscales were combined to measure Meaning. The Decision-Making and Impact subscales were combined to measure the criterion variable of Impact.

Results of the multiple regression analysis with the three predictor variables (Self-Determination, Competence, and Meaning) on Impact are presented in Table 5. Table 5 displays the correlations among the variables, the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β), the semipartial correlations (sr^2), and the R, R^2, and adjusted R^2 after entry of all three predictor variables. The

Table 5

Regression of Sense of Empowerment Variables on Impact (n = 86)

Variables	1	2	3	4	B	β	sr^2
Self-Determination	.70	-			.33	.42	.49**
Competence	.69	.51	-		.25	.27	.15**
Meaning	.68	.46	.68	-	.38	.30	.05**
Intercept					-.20		
Mean	3.76	3.58	4.23	4.49			
SD	.59	.76	.62	.46			

NOTE: 1 = Impact (dependent variable); 2 = Self-Determination; 3 = Competence; 4 = Meaning.
Total Model: R = .83, R^2 = .68, Adjusted R^2 = .67**
**p < .01

regression analysis produced a significant result, R = .83, F (3, 82) = 57.81, p < .01, resulting in the selection of all three of the predictor variables.

After the first model, beginning with the regression of Self-Determination on Impact (DV), R^2 = .49, F (1, 84) = 79.65, p < .01. After the inclusion of Competence, R^2 = .63, F (2, 83) = 71.67, p < .01. With the final addition of Meaning, R^2 = .68, F (3, 82) = 57.81, p < .01. The addition of each of the three predictor variables resulted in significant increments in R^2. The adjusted R^2 of the entire model was .67, meaning that 67% of the variation in Impact was predicted from the linear combination of the predictor variables of Self-Determination, Competence, and Meaning, following adjustment for the expected inflation of R in the study sample.

Supplemental Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted to compare mean levels on all study variables by participant demographic characteristics. Independent sample t-tests and ANOVAs

were used to explore differences based on job position, tenure on the job, years of education, and school level. For job position, due to sample size limitations, participants were coded into 'teacher' and 'non-teacher' groups. For years of education, participants were coded into 'advanced degree' or 'less than an advanced degree'. Findings indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between study variable mean levels by job position. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference between study variable mean levels by years of education.

Using ANOVA, participants were grouped into three categories for job tenure: less than 10 years, 10-20 years, and more than twenty years. These categories were created based on research related to the rise and decline of teacher satisfaction and motivation (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). ANOVA results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the job tenure groups on the Autonomy ($F = 4.05$; $p < .05$) and Impact variables ($F = 3.17$; $p < .05$). Autonomy relates to the control that personnel have over their work lives and Impact relates to the effect and influence personnel have on their school life.

Significant differences also were found using ANOVA based on level of school: elementary, middle, and high. Differences were found among the three groups on the variables of Expectation ($F = 7.72$; $p < .001$), Involvement ($F = 24.38$; $p < .001$), Order ($F = 8.00$; $p < .001$), Decision Making ($F = 4.08$; $p < .05$), and Autonomy ($F = 5.87$; $p < .01$). Elementary school personnel had lower mean scores on Autonomy and Decision Making than the other two groups, demonstrating that they perceived less control and participation in aspects that affect their work life. Conversely, high school personnel reported lower mean scores for Order, Involvement, and Expectation than the other two groups. This

finding suggests that a less organized school climate is perceived at the high school level, which encompasses less parental/community involvement and student responsibility for learning.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

When applied to the field of education, the theoretical framework presented in Spreitzer's (1997) model suggests the need for schools to facilitate the development of a positive school climate, social capital, and staff empowerment, in an attempt to create constructive school conditions that lead to desired outcomes for students. Systemic change should direct schools to focus on the interrelationships among the members of the school community as a way to facilitate the implementation of NCLB policies and regulations. Collaborative and empowering environments create the natural conditions for change to occur. The present study solicited the perceptions of school personnel in the Haslett (Michigan) School District to gain data useful to better understanding these interrelationships.

The current investigation had two purposes. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment among professional school personnel. It was anticipated that a study of the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment would provide schools with information useful for assessing internal assets and barriers. The research question of interest in relation to the primary purpose was as follows: What is the relationship of school social structure and teacher empowerment?

The second purpose of this investigation was to examine the relationships among the components of sense of empowerment among professional school personnel. The research question of interest for addressing this purpose was: What is the relationship among the components of empowerment? The potential value of this study is in

providing data useful for better understanding school organizational factors that may promote school improvement efforts. This chapter addresses the following topics: (a) limitations of the study; (b) narrative summary of results; (c) relation of findings to previous research; (d) theoretical and practice implications; and (e) suggestions for future research.

Limitations of the Study

Prior to discussion of the results and their implications, several limitations should be noted for the current study. The first relates to the nature of the study participants. From a demographic characteristic perspective, the participants in this study were homogeneous. The majority of participants in this sample were well-educated (93.9% attaining a bachelor's degree or higher) and Caucasian (95.9%). The sample was also largely female (71.4%), although this is consistent with the general field of elementary and secondary education. Participant demographic characteristics, combined with the convenience sampling procedure, present significant limitations to generalizability. Because study participants are not representative of the general professional school personnel population, findings in this study cannot be generalized beyond the current sample.

A second potential limitation in relation to the study sample is that some of the participants may have participated in or been aware of the self-determination learning community offered through the Ingham Intermediate School District. Participant awareness of the learning community may have provided for a unique perspective or bias regarding the topics of school climate, social capital, and sense empowerment, which was different from those participants who were not aware of the self-determination learning

community.

Next, as per a pre-analysis statistical power analysis, power was adequate for calculating a multiple regression analysis that would yield stable and reliable data. However, due to sample size limitations, the power for conducting the canonical analysis was less than optimal. As such, the results of the canonical analysis may lack stability and reliability and must be viewed and interpreted with caution.

Finally, multicollinearity among variables was a limitation in this study. Multicollinearity may have contributed to the lack of significant findings for the canonical correlation analysis beyond the first canonical variate. The instruments that were selected may have been too similar regarding the constructs they purport to measure. More specifically, the high levels of correlation between the social structure and empowerment variables likely influenced the results in relation to Research Question 1. Further, the high levels of correlation among the empowerment variables as measured by the *SPES* likely influenced results in relation to Research Question 2. A note of caution regarding future research in this area is that investigators must consider potential multicollinearity between school social structure and empowerment constructs in instrument selection and variable measurement.

Narrative Summary of Results

The first purpose of the current investigation, to examine the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment among professional school personnel, was addressed through the application of canonical correlation analysis. The canonical correlation for the first and only canonical variate was .73. As such, 53% of the variance between the school social structure and sense of empowerment variables is explained by

the first canonical variate. This finding suggests that a moderate relationship exists between the social structure and empowerment variable sets.

Results in the current study indicated that the structure loadings of each of the predictor and criterion variables were greater than .30. Absolute vales of structure coefficients greater than .30 can be interpreted as important in defining the dimensions, characteristics, or meaning of a canonical variate (Polit, 1996). This finding is, in part, likely due to the high levels of correlation among the variables. The finding that each of the variables had structure loadings greater than .30 makes definitive interpretation of the canonical variate tenuous. One aspect of the canonical variate interpretation that is potentially reliable follows below.

Regarding the contribution of variables to the canonical variate, Collaboration had the greatest ratio of importance for the criterion variables of social structure, whereas Professional Growth and Impact had the greatest importance for the predictor variables of sense of empowerment. Collaboration relates to the extent to which administration, faculty, and students cooperate and participate in problem solving. Professional Growth relates to teachers' perceptions that their school provides opportunities to grow and develop as a professional, to learn continuously, and to expand one's skills. Impact corresponds to teachers' perceptions that they have an effect and influence on school life. Given the importance of these variables to the canonical variate, it can be hypothesized that collaborative work environments, professional growth opportunities, and the ability to impact outcomes strongly influence the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment. Additional studies, conducted with instruments, constructs, and sampling procedures able to ameliorate the potential limitations of the present study,

are needed to corroborate these findings.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to answer the second research question based on the hypothesized relationship among the components of sense of empowerment illustrated in Figure 4 (p. 58). Because each of the three variables of Self-Determination, Competence, and Meaning entered the regression equation at statistically significant levels and added to the amount of variance accounted for in the criterion variable of Impact, results provided evidence to support the following hypothesized model:

> Self-determination is the initial component in the development of a sense of empowerment. Following a greater experience of self-determination, school personnel begin to feel more competent in their professional role. Professional competence leads to a greater sense of purpose and meaning, with the external benefit of increased status among colleagues. With greater status and purpose of role, school personnel can have a more significant impact through increased control. This impact and achievement of control are desired outcomes that continue to feed the cycle of sense of empowerment.

Relation of Findings to Previous Research

The findings in the current study are consistent with previous research in several ways. First, in considering social capital, Collaboration was found to be highly related to the canonical variate, while Involvement was not. Collaboration represents social capital factors internal to the school, while Involvement relates to social capital external to the school, such as parents and the community. Similarly, Spreitzer (1996) found that access to external resources was not related to empowerment. Additionally, Sweetland and Hoy

(2000) found that the climate variable of environmental press, categorized as strong pressure from parents and the community to change the school, was not sufficient to empower teachers. The implication of this finding is that perhaps irrespective of the external supports and resources that are available to schools, a collegial and collaborative environment can generate substantial internal social capital to create a positive school environment. In other words, it is what is inside the school counts. Studies utilizing districts with demographics and resources different from the one used in this study would be paramount to clarifying this discovery.

Second, Pepper, and Thomas (2002) postulated that schools that value teacher professionalism promote a climate of collaboration where teachers can work together to provide mutual support and constructive feedback to one another. In like fashion, the current study points to Collaboration and Professional Growth as the most important variables from each of the predictor and criterion variable sets relative to contributing to the canonical variate. This finding suggests that school systems interested in enhancing social structure and staff empowerment should focus on (a) methods to improve collaboration among members and (b) staff professional development. Professional development which focuses on a learning community paradigm may mutually enhance these conditions.

Finally, regarding the significance of the empowerment variables in the canonical variate, Professional Growth and Status were more significant predictors than Autonomy, Self-Efficacy, Impact, and Decision-Making. This finding suggests that the facilitation of sense of empowerment for school personnel can be most greatly impacted by increasing an individual's career/job status and enhancing his or her professional competence.

Further, in light of the discrepancy of status between general and special educators reported in the literature (e.g., Halpern, 1999), morale building and professional development efforts should focus on cross-departmental collaboration to elevate the status of personnel across departmental lines.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The results of this investigation have implications for advancing both empowerment theory and professional education practice. Regarding empowerment theory, the findings of the present study, contextualized by the school setting, can be used to further develop Spreitzer's (1997) theoretical model of individual empowerment in organizations in two distinct ways. First, similar to Spreitzer's (1996) finding that access to resources was not related to empowerment, in the present study, Involvement of parents and the community was found to be of less importance in relation to empowerment than Collaboration. As purported by Spreitzer (1997) theoretically, this finding emphasizes the significance of internal social capital for promoting organizational empowerment.

Second, Professional Growth, as a measure of competence, was the most important predictor variable in relation to social structure. Spreitzer et al. (1997) found that competence was related to effectiveness, work satisfaction, and lower levels of job strain. Thus, both empirical findings and theoretical hypotheses (i.e., Spreitzer, 1997) suggest that the level and quality of competence among school personnel is a significant factor in relation to social structure and overall empowerment, and, by extension, potentially student achievement outcomes.

The present findings also have two important implications for practice in the field

of education. First, professional development, collaboration, and status of personnel emerged as important variables for evaluating the relationship between social structure and empowerment. The results of the current and other studies (e.g., Little, 1982; Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997; Short & Greer, 1997) suggest that collegiality and the use of learning communities are hallmarks of a positive school environment. As such, the development of positive school environments may be most effectively promoted through professional development/training, collaborative work arrangements, and recognition of the contributions of all school personnel (Status). Second, findings suggest that collaboration among the members of the school was a more important predictor of the relation between social capital and empowerment than the involvement of families and the community. If additional studies yielded similar results, such data would indicate that in order to maximize social capital and facilitate the empowerment of school personnel, it would be critically important for schools to emphasize the involvement of internal school members (i.e., administration, staff, and students).

The utility of the present study is also of importance in light of contemporary educational reform. With consideration to the aforementioned limitations to the study, the implications of the study can be viewed in terms of its direct usefulness. The reality of the *No Child Left Behind Act* is that corrective action is not immediate, so that schools may languish before adjustments are made. Sanctions are only brought upon schools if they fail to meet their annual yearly progress goals for two or three consecutive years (Howell, 2006). To be able to productively affect change at the local level and still have control assumed by the schools, interventions for school improvement must be implemented before this sanction schedule.

For this to occur, steps must be taken proactively and preemptively at the school and district level. The current study points to the variables of Collaboration, Professional Development, Impact, and Status as important to the development of positive school social structure and the empowerment of school personnel. Translated into useful interventions, school must focus on the cross-departmental learning community paradigm of professional development in order to improve the competence, prestige, and empowerment of individuals within the school community.

One caveat to the findings of this study, given its limitations, is that the model purported here was substantiated using a suburban, well-resourced school district. The model may not hold in an urban school district with fewer resources. The literature is replete with evidence suggesting the continual promotion of collegiality, professional development, and collaboration at the school level (e.g., Cherniss, 1995; Martinez, 2004; Short & Greer, 1997). Additional, more diversified inquiry is needed to bear out the findings of the current investigation to add to this body of research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Several suggestions should be considered regarding future research on school social structure and sense of empowerment within the milieu of school improvement, both in relation to procedure and substance. First, with respect to procedure, future school social structure and empowerment investigations should expand the type of constructs/variables that are studied in order to more specifically explicate the relationships between these two constructs and among the components of empowerment. The constructs, as measured in the current study, may have been too similar, thus resulting in high correlation levels. Additional explanatory variables should be sought to

reduce this occurrence. Further, it would be instructive to evaluate the relationships between social structure and empowerment beyond the individual at the school building level. In the future, instruments should be selected or designed that include the ability to collect district-level data. Such data potentially would provide more generalizable results across schools and aid in distinguishing between school and district-level factors influencing school climate and school personnel empowerment.

Second, future studies should include a larger and more diverse group of study participants in order to increase the potential generalizability of results. While the information gained in this study may be useful for the individual school district's staff development and school improvement efforts, it is not possible to extend the findings beyond the sample used in the current investigation. Future studies should intentionally seek to include more diverse samples across multiple school districts in order to more specifically delineate the relation between school social structure and sense of empowerment, as well as to delineate the aspects of each of these constructs that promote positive student outcomes.

Third, global school reform issues should be included in future investigations in order to differentiate a third level of impact, the state/federal level. It is a plausible hypothesis that the attitudes toward *No Child Left Behind* among school personnel will influence their impressions of school climate, social capital, and sense of empowerment.

Finally, the present study focused on only the first two components (social structure and empowerment) of Spreitzer's (1997) model of individual empowerment in organizations. Exploring the relationship between social structure and sense of empowerment was a first step toward developing interventions for school improvement.

Following additional studies to explicate the relationships among social structure and sense of empowerment, the third aspect of Spreitzer's model, behavioral outcomes, should be examined within the school context (i.e., personnel effectiveness and student achievement).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

The Relationship between Social Structure and Sense of Empowerment for School Personnel

Demographic Questionnaire

Please mark or provide the answers that best describe you.

1. Indicate the level of your school.

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ Middle
- ☐ High School

2. Indicate your position at the school.

- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ General Education Teacher
- ☐ Paraprofessional
- ☐ Special Education Teacher
- ☐ Counselor/Therapist
- ☐ Other _____

_____

3. How many total years of experience do you have as a school employee (e.g., teacher, administrator, support staff)?

_____

4. How many years of experience do you have as an employee at YOUR SCHOOL?

_____

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High school diploma or less
- ☐ Associate's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Degree beyond Master's

6. Which best describes you?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Multiracial
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Caucasian

7. What is your age?

_____

8. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

APPENDIX B

MSU Institutional Review Board (UCRIHS) Exemption Letter

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Initial IRB Application Determination *Exempt*

April 26, 2006

To: John KOSCIULEK
458 Erickson Hall

Re: **IRB # X06-334** **Category: EXEMPT 1-2**
Approval Date: April 25, 2006

Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that your project has been deemed as exempt in accordance with federal regulations.

OFFICE OF REGULATORY AFFAIRS
Human Research Protection Programs

BIOMEDICAL & HEALTH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (BIRB)

COMMUNITY RESEARCH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (CRIRB)

SOCIAL SCIENCE/ BEHAVIORAL / EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (SIRB)

202 Olds Hall
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1046
517-355-2180
Fax: 517-432-4503

www.humanresearch.msu.edu
BIRB & SIRB: IRB@msu.edu
CRIRB: crirb@msu.edu

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an ***Application for Permanent Closure***

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Peter Vasilenko, Ph D.
SIRB Chair

c. Andrea Perkins
401A Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48854

APPENDIX C

Letter of Informed Consent

The Relationship between Social Structure and Sense of Empowerment for School Personnel

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your participation in a study being conducted by researchers at Michigan State University entitled "The Relationship between Social Structure and Sense of Empowerment for School Personnel." The primary purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between school social structure and sense of empowerment among professional school personnel. The secondary purpose of this study is to explore the sense of empowerment in school personnel.

The social structure of a school can be described by the climate of the school and its social capital. School climate can be characterized by staff morale, cultural norms, and the overall personality of the school, while social capital can be defined by the networks and resources among a staff that facilitate coordinated action. Empowerment in school personnel is defined as a set of characteristics reflecting the personal beliefs and mind-set an individual has about his/her role in the school organization. It is believed that this study may assist with increasing understanding of the organizational and interpersonal factors that create educational conditions conducive to staff collaboration, greater individual and group investment in reform efforts, and, ultimately, improved student outcomes.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a professional school staff member. Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. However, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer certain questions, or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. If you are willing to participate in this study, you will complete the enclosed study questionnaire. The study questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. At any time while completing the enclosed questionnaire, you can decide to stop and not continue.

Please be assured that any information provided will not allow the investigator to identify you, as an individual. Even if this could be done, no attempt will be made to do so. If you choose to participate in the study, your status with the Haslett Public Schools will not be affected. The results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. However, no individual names or other identifying information will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study and your name will not be connected to any of your answers. Your privacy will be protected by the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact the investigator (Andrea Perkins, 401A Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, 517-432-4863, perkin97@msu.edu) or her faculty research advisor (Dr. John Kosciulek, 458 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, 517-353-9443, jkosciul@msu.edu). If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonymously, if you wish—the Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director of Human Research Protections by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

You may keep this copy of this letter for your reference and records. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning the questionnaire.

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