Democratic Community in Public K-12 Schools in Alabama

by

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Abstract

In many schools today, there is low teacher morale amongst faculty. One way to increase morale is to implement democratic community within schools where teachers can have a sense of belonging and collaborating to educate students. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay in public schools in Alabama. Data were collected from a sample of public-school teachers in Alabama using an instrument that consisted of four measures: teacher morale, commitment, intent to stay, and WorldBlu School Survey. Data was analyzed via a linear regression model to determine if an association between democratic community and the four measures exist. The findings reveal the association between democratic community and the alignment of variables of teachers' intent to stay and the commitment of teachers were found to be positive and statistically significant. However, teacher morale was found not as significant in an indirect effect on the association between democratic community and the variables of teachers' intent to stay and the commitment of teachers. Recommendations for future practice include promoting a democratic community within a school environment. Further, it is suggested that future researchers explore the relationships between democratic community alignment, teaching commitment, and teachers' intentions, further investigating mediating variables such as school climate, teacher experiences, and leadership styles that may impact teacher commitment and intent to stay.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Education is important, and a well-organized education system is significant for human development (Modisaotsile, 2012). Thus, "education is essential for every individual to improve learning, enhance lifestyle, and develop the social and economic status of life" (Sibuyi, 2016). Because of the importance of education and students' learning, the organization and goals of schools must be clear (Kaleem et al., 2021). Yet, leaders' leadership style is a concern in the education system (Kaleem et al., 2021). During the early 20th century, "Frederick Winslow Taylor changed the vision of the way leaders or managers dealt with employees" (Kaleem et al., 2021). Additionally, "school leadership gives a practical vision to develop a healthy school climate which contains goal oriented teaching-learning environment and students' performance" (Yildiz et al., 2014).

Not all leaders lead the same, and many of them have various beliefs of how much autonomy, if any, others will have when it comes to an organization or school. Authoritarian leaders exert the most control when operating schools or organizations without input from others (Flynn, 2019). Authoritarian leaders give followers little to no control and limited decision-making opportunities (Flynn, 2019). Gastil (1994) explained that authoritarian leadership style leads to higher followers' dissatisfaction, turn-over, as well as absenteeism. With authoritarian leadership, leaders do not distribute roles or share power with people within the organization, and often others do not have the autonomy to make decisions (Flynn, 2019). Today, the use of authoritarian leadership is not encouraged as the most effective style for leaders to utilize (Kilicoglu, 2018).

Although there are some leaders who utilize authoritarian leadership style today, it is not recommended to use as it leads to more dissatisfaction and less teamwork within organizations

(Gastil, 1994). The field of educational leadership has shifted from an authoritarian style to a style that encourages more power and leadership roles to be shared amongst people within the organization to manage change and school improvement (Kosterelioglu, 2017). This leadership style is commonly known as democratic leadership (Kosterelioglu, 2017). Democratic leadership style is encouraged to empower others to participate in decision making and to effectively improve schools. Utilizing democratic leadership style may lead to higher teacher morale and retention in schools (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010).

More research is necessary to determine if the use of democratic leadership leads to higher teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay in schools. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study which is to explore the relationships between democratic community and its relationship to teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay.

History of Leadership

Dambe and Moorad indicated that authoritarian leaders have been associated with commanding, controlling behaviors, and unwillingness to share power (2008). Owens (2001), as stated by Dambe and Moore (2008), indicated that in 1978 leaders begin to shift their thinking from authoritarian to a willingness to share power. Dambe and Moorad (2008) explained that "the paradigm shift is often from power to empowerment" (p. 584). There are different sources of power, but power should be distributed amongst everyone within an organization (Lambert et al., 2002).

Lambert et al. (2002) indicated leaders should consider developing effective learning communities within schools. They studied the need to re-think leadership, learning, and learning communities in schools and how learning communities and shared leadership affect the overall

performance of schools. Lambert et al. (2002) also explained a paradigm shift is an effective way to implement change, assessment, and accountability in education. Additionally, the researchers stressed the importance of leaders sharing power with others. According to Lambert et al. (2002), many schools have not involved teachers in leadership.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership style is viewed as an analytical framework for understanding how leadership is enacted in schools or as a perspective approach to school improvement (Spillane et al., 2001). Kelley and Dikkers (2016) stated that "distributed leadership was introduced and developed as a conceptual lens to shift the study of leadership from the individual leader to an examination of leadership distributed across the organization" (p. 395). There is a need to distribute leadership roles. Spillane (2006) explained that "distributing leadership throughout the organization does not downplay the critical role of the leader but highlights ways in which leadership is spread across individuals throughout the organization" (p. 397-398).

Although democratic and distributed leadership are similar, they are not the same. Democratic leadership is focused on empowerment and participation from others; while distributed leadership is focused on organizational change, responsiveness, and improvement (Woods, 2004). Distributed leadership includes leadership by a single leader with flow across the organization hierarchy. Distributed leadership places a high emphasis on goals and culture. Democratic leadership nurtures communities that are inclusive and values others' input towards organizational change for the better (Woods, 2020). Kensler and Woods (2012) stated, "the idea that leadership needs to be distributed for it to be most effective in enhancing learning in schools continues to have powerful momentum" (p. 702). Thus, distributing leadership and seeking input from others could be crucial in effectively improving schools (Hulpia et al., 2009; Kensler &

Woods, 2012).

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership is defined as a type of leadership style where roles and responsibilities are distributed amongst the organization (Kosterelioglu, 2017). According to Woods (2020), democratic leadership is the style of leadership that can include people rather than treating them simply as followers of a leader. However, implementing this practice can be complex or challenging at times (Woods, 2020). Woods (2020) also stated that democratic leadership is the style of leadership that a principal may utilize so that teachers, staff, and students feel included and consulted within their school. It is almost impossible to lead a school or any organization alone. Educational leaders are responsible for instruction, funding, culture and climate, daily operations of the school, teachers, and more importantly, students. All these responsibilities can be overwhelming and quite stressful at times; thus, it is important to distribute some of the roles and responsibilities with teachers and members of the leadership team to ensure schools operate smoothly and effectively (Gastil, 1994).

As cited in Choi (2007), Anderson (1959) defined a democratic leader as one who shares decision making with others. He asserted that "democratic leadership is associated with higher morale in most situations" (p. 246). Although Anderson made the assertion in 1959, perhaps some educational leaders are not utilizing democratic leadership style enough today which could contribute to why low teacher morale is still an issue in some schools. Thus, this study is to determine the relationships between democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay. Gastil (1994) defined the characteristics of democratic leadership as sharing responsibility among other members, empowering other members, and including the group in the decision-making process. Additionally, Hackman and Johnson (1996)

expressed democratic leadership is associated with increasing followers' satisfaction, involvement, and commitment to their organization.

Democratic leadership is rich in the way that it encourages others within the school and address power differences so that leadership is shared in a more collaborative approach (Woods, 2020). More importantly, democratic leadership in schools not only promotes sharing power and enhancing dialogue, but it fosters organization and well-being through community that fosters belonging and individuality (Woods, 2020).

Democratic Leadership and Teacher Morale. Utilizing democratic leadership style empowers teachers to assist in decision making. This utilization of democratic leadership not only helps with morale and student achievement, but it also helps with teachers' intent to stay working at their schools (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Delgado, 2014; Ingersoll, 2000; Kilicoglu, 2018; Patchen, 1970).

Lumsden (1998) explained "people who feel empowered tend to have higher morale" (p. 4). "By empowering teachers in ways such as involving them in decision making of policies and acknowledging their expertise, administrators can help sustain teacher morale" (Lumsden, 1998, p. 5). When others are not empowered or have autonomy to make decisions, it could lead to low teacher morale which may affect teacher retention in schools (Flynn, 2019).

Teachers collaborating and having autonomy regarding curriculum not only help them build relationships, but it also contributes to the success of students' learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). When teacher morale is high, teachers are often committed to their jobs, and students' achievement is usually higher (Leech & Fulton, 2008). Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) explained when teacher morale is high, not only do students reap the benefit academically, but teachers' intent to stay is higher.

Teachers play an important role in students' education and in increasing achievement. No interaction in a school is more critical than the one between teachers and students (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Teachers are the ones who educate students and increase student achievement. Educational leaders creating a positive culture in schools is also important. High morale decreases teacher turnover and improves students' learning (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). If teachers are happy and committed to their schools, they likely will remain which will contribute to higher teacher retention (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). As cited in Brill and McCartney (2008), studies show that between forty and fifty percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003). Brill and McCartney (2008) explained building teachers who are committed to student achievement and relates to their schools and communities must be primary goals if America's public schools are to improve.

A positive working culture, trust, autonomy, and input regarding decision making often relate to higher teacher morale (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). As cited in Lumsden (1998), Hoy and Miskel (1987) explained when teachers feel good about each other and feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs, there is a healthy school environment and teacher morale is high. Some teachers like having the autonomy to make decisions and collaborating in professional learning communities. They also like being recognized, whether it is formally or informally (Andrews, 1985). Teachers like being acknowledged and working in positive cultures where they have positive rapport with their co-workers and administrators. If morale is high, teachers' intent to stay at their schools may be higher.

When teachers are granted autonomy and they are a part of decision making at their schools, they are usually satisfied (Shambaugh, 2017). Empowering teachers to have autonomy and collaborating as a team often leads to higher morale in schools (Huysman, 2008). Higher

morale usually means an increase in teachers' intent to stay at their schools, which in turn affects student achievement (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Willis & Varner, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

There has been a teacher shortage for over 20 years (Hoffman et al., 2007). Teachers are needed to help educate students daily. When there is a decrease in teachers, students may not be able to learn at their highest potential. Thus, retaining teachers and increasing teachers' intent to stay could be crucial to the success of students and schools' overall improvement. Teachers may not have intentions of remaining teaching at certain schools due to the lack of emotional support, especially novice teachers, and the lack of support and encouragement from administrators (Hoffman et al., 2007).

Researchers have found that working conditions also may play an important factor that affects attrition and teachers' intent to leave or stay (Billingsley & Bettini, 2020). Resources help teachers fulfil their job responsibilities. Lack of resources to educate students may affect teachers' intent to stay (Bettini et al., 2020). Retaining teachers and improving in areas that may increase teachers' intent to stay may be beneficial for educational leaders to study. Tickle et al. (2011) claimed "identifying variables that have a direct effect on teachers' job satisfaction is vital to decreasing teacher attrition and facilitating true reform in education" (p. 343).

This chapter describes the history of leadership, defines democratic leadership, as well as cites research that discuss teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay, in hopes to further determine to what extent does leadership style has on teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay in schools.

Democratic leadership style assists with learning communities and the involvement of

teachers and stakeholders, whereas distributed leadership style assists with the organizations'

outcome. Educational leaders are seeking to increase student achievement. Therefore, utilizing

democratic leadership may lead to increasing teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher

intent to stay in schools. Additionally, Day et al. (2009) explained that distributed leadership

may be important to use when it comes to schools' success in improving pupil's outcomes. Day

et al. (2009) also shared distributed leadership may have some effect on organizations

holistically, as well as improving staff morale which in turn may impact student learning.

Research indicates there is an issue with low teacher morale (Willis & Varner, 2010). Because

teachers play an important role in educating students (Brill and McCartney, 2008), it is crucial to

investigate what causes low teacher morale and teachers' intent to stay. Utilizing democratic

leadership and including teachers in decision making may lead to higher teacher morale, as well

as teacher intent to stay in schools. While research shows a connection between democratic

leadership and high teacher morale (Lumsden,1998; Hunter-Boykin & Evans,1995), more

research is necessary to determine to what extent democratic leadership style affects teacher

morale, teacher commitment, and ultimately, teachers' intent to stay.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between democratic community,

teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay in public schools in Alabama.

Teachers play a role in educating students and their academic success. Thus, it may be beneficial

for principals to seek ways to encourage teachers to be committed as well as to remain teaching

at their present school.

Educational leaders are ultimately responsible for school improvement. Leaders are also

responsible for the safety of their faculty and staff, students, academics, hiring, developing,

empowering, and retaining teachers, to name a few. Some leaders' leadership style varies based on several aspects. Because leaders play several roles on a day-to-day basis, it is usually difficult to complete all tasks alone effectively. Using democratic leadership style empowers teachers the autonomy to educate their students, as well as participate in decision making. Leaders' leadership styles affect culture and climate of schools which affects teacher morale, commitment, and intent to stay (Haberman, 2013). Educational leaders play a major role in maintaining positive morale and culture in schools (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1999). If teacher morale is high and teachers are happy to teach at their school, then usually their intent to stay is higher, and they are committed, which directly affects student achievement (Glickman, 2003; Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). To increase student achievement, leaders should create a culture of empowered leadership and decision making (Louis et al., 2010).

Model A as shown in Figure 1 shows that morale mediates the relationship between democratic community and teacher commitment. If morale is a mediator between democratic community and teacher commitment, then democratic community may be a significant predictor of teachers being committed to their prospective schools. Morale as a mediator will possibly explain the relationship between democratic community and teacher commitment.

Model B as shown in Figure 2 shows that morale mediates the relationship between democratic community and teacher intent to stay. If morale is a mediator between democratic community and teacher intent, then democratic community may be a significant predictor of teachers' intentions to stay at their prospective schools. Morale as a mediator will possibly explain the relationship between democratic community and teacher intent to stay.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Model A Predicted Teacher Morale as a Mediating Variable Between Democratic Community and Teacher Commitment.
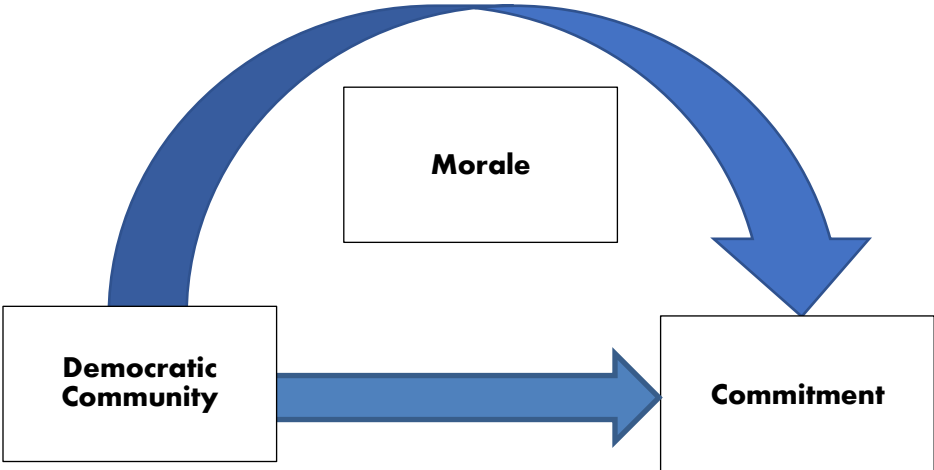
Figure 2

Model B Predicted Teacher Morale as a Mediating Variable Between Democratic Community and Teacher Intent to Stay.
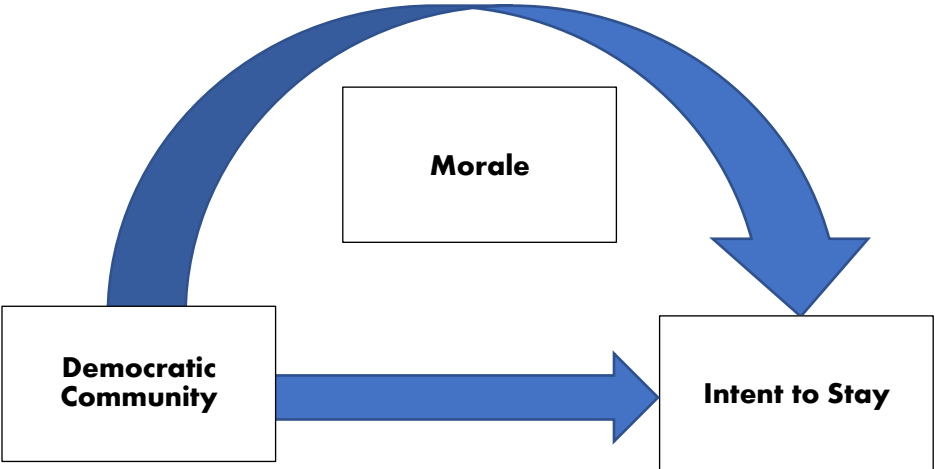
Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. Is democratic community associated with teacher commitment?

2. Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher commitment?

3. Is democratic community associated with teacher intent to stay?

4. Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher intent to stay?

Research Design

The research design is a quantitative, cross-sectional design. The data was collected via a survey instrument comprised on four multi-item scales: democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intention to stay. The research questions were addressed with path analyses for a mediation model specifying democratic community as the predictor or independent variable and teacher morale as the mediator variable. The first path analysis had teacher commitment as the dependent or outcome variable. The second path analysis had teacher intention to stay as the outcome or dependent variable. Multiple linear regression was used for both analyses.

For the mediation model with teacher commitment as the outcome variable, three linear multiple regressions were performed to test for the direct and indirect (via teacher morale) effects of democratic community on teacher commitment. First, democratic community was regressed on teacher commitment. Second, democratic community was regressed on morale. Third, both democratic community and morale were regressed on teacher commitment.

For the mediation model with teacher intention to stay as the outcome variable, three

linear multiple regressions were performed to test for the direct and indirect (via teacher morale) effects of democratic community on teacher intention to stay. First, democratic community was regressed on teacher intention to stay. Second, democratic community was regressed on morale. Third, both democratic community and morale were regressed on teacher intention to stay.

Assumptions

One assumption of the study was that the participants answered the survey honestly. This assumption was reasonable given the informed consent of all study participants, which ensured that their responses would remain confidential and be analyzed at the aggregate level only. Another assumption of the study was that developing understanding of the extent to which democratic community directly and indirectly affects teacher commitment and teacher intention to stay will inform decision making about retaining and growing the teacher workforce in Alabama. A third assumption is that the delimitations of the study were not detrimental to the assumption that the results can inform decision making.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were as follows. First, the dataset was cross-sectional due to time and financial resources constraints. Second, the mediation model was limited to two predictor variables – democratic community and teacher morale – and two dependent variables – teacher commitment and teacher intention to stay – due to the chosen theoretical framework. Third, the population was limited to teachers who teach in a public school in Alabama.

Limitations

This study was limited in terms of measurement validity, internal validity, and external validity. The limitation in terms of measurement validity is mono-source bias, which can occur when all data are collected using a single instrument. The cross-sectional nature of the dataset is

the source of numerous threats to internal validity, namely the maturation and history threats. Accordingly, the results cannot demonstrate a causal relationship. The threat to external validity was the sample selection method, which was non-random. Accordingly, the results cannot be generalized to the population of public-school teachers in Alabama.

Significance of the Study

This study will explore democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay in public schools in Alabama. This study will provide insight for educational leaders as to the importance of including teachers and other stakeholders when making decisions. More research is necessary to close the gap to determine if the use of democratic leadership style leads to higher teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay in schools.

Ingersoll et al. (2018) suggested school leaders and teachers are crucial to teaching and learning as well as the decision-making process for the success of students. The authors wrote that teaching and learning is important, so is who has roles in decision-making, and teachers and stakeholders should be involved in decision making. According to Ingersoll et al. (2018), "good school leadership actively involves teachers in decision making, and that these are tied to higher student achievement" (p. 17).

According to Smith and Benavot (2019), democratic community and democratic voice are suggested for leaders to incorporate when it comes to teachers and stakeholders being involved in decision-making to help make the best decisions regarding the educational organization. Smith and Benavot (2019) suggested that "structured democratic voice in education is most effective when multiple stakeholders—including parents, teachers, students, and other community members—are able to articulate their views on policy planning and evaluation in

ways that their concerns are heard and valued" (p. 195).

Definition of Terms

• Authoritarian leadership: a leadership style in which domineering leaders give their followers little to no control of their environment (Flynn, 2019).

• Collaborative leadership: where the responsibility for leadership is shared among the group membership, rather than falling to one individual (Lawrence, 2017).

• Commitment: Committed teachers tend to perform the roles effectively that their job requires and to establish a good teacher-student relationship in accordance with professional values. Commitment to the institution in education manifests itself in identifying with the school, feeling like a part of the school, and being loyal to school (Mart, 2013).

• Democratic communities: Leech & Fulton (2008) define democratic communities as a collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas. The bonding and binding are tight enough to transform them from a collection of "I's" into a collection of "we" (p. 632). In addition, Kensler et al. (2009) define democratic communities as a school community where democratic principles operate at the personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels (p. 701).

• Democratic leadership: the idea that leadership roles and responsibilities are shared amongst people within the organization to manage change and school improvement (Kosterelioglu, 2017).

• Distributed leadership: an analytical framework for understanding how leadership is enacted in schools or as a perspective approach to school improvement (Spillane et al., 2001).

• Intent to stay: an employee's likelihood of staying at an organization (Kim et al., 1996).

• Shared leadership: a collaborative leadership process in which tasks and responsibilities are distributed amongst a group of individuals (Kocolowski, 2010).

• Teacher morale: the way in which the need of a person is satisfied, and the person's perception

of how the job has brought a state of satisfaction to fruition (Bentley & Rempel, 1970).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic, defines the

purpose of the study and research questions, explains the research design, defines assumptions

and delimitations, explains the study's significance, and defines terms important to the study. In

chapter two, the researcher reviews literature from previous research studies. Chapter three

describes how the study is designed, and chapter four presents the results. In chapter five, the

researcher provides suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to review studies regarding democratic leadership and its relationship to teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay in schools. This chapter will review existing research to (1) define democratic leadership and its characteristics; (2) connect democratic leadership with morale and intent to stay; (3) connect morale with schools' environment; (4) connect democratic leadership to teacher commitment; (5) connect teacher intent to stay to student achievement.

Democratic Leadership

Many leaders have been using democratic forms of leadership for a long time, and researchers are encouraging leaders to begin utilizing this type of style for multiple reasons. In education today, democratic leadership is more related to having meaningful relationships, collaborative relationships, and using strategies that best help move schools forward academically with the help of all stakeholders (Kilicoglu, 2018). In addition, Woods (2004) stated "it is also necessary to state that democratic leadership entails rights to meaningful participation and respect for and expectations toward everyone as ethical beings" (p. 4).

Democratic leadership is based on Dewey's philosophy that an environment supports participation, sharing of ideas, and the virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility, and compassion (Starrat, 2001). It implies that educational leaders are responsible for building an environment that is open to seek others' input regarding decision making in schools. Democratic leadership also pertains to empowerment within schools. Empowerment and autonomy often lead to satisfied and happy teachers which in turn positively affect student achievement (Starrat, 2001). Improving schools is what accountability is all about; therefore, it is important that teachers are encouraged to have the empowerment and autonomy to be included in making decisions that are

inside and outside of their classroom walls. It is a challenge to lead and to operate a school alone; therefore, people are needed to help the school stay aligned with its vision, mission, and goals. In the field of educational leadership, with accountability being a major part of assessment, leaders are more than likely concerned with the success and achievement of their school. In schools, leaders and district level leaders often try to determine how to improve teachers' instructional practice so that students may have high school achievement. *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 caused a change in accountability measurements. Because of the change regarding accountability, not only principals are held accountable, but teachers are too. An increase in teacher influence in schools has the potential for a significant positive effect on school improvement.

Accountability is important in democratic organizations. Kensler (2015) stated "effective accountability systems make sure the individual and the system used are clear on expectations and what they are accountable for" (p. 13). In systems that are coherent, the accountability system is aligned with purpose, mission, and vision of the organization; in effective schools, accountability supports high expectations and positive reinforcement of student and teacher performance (Kensler, 2015).

Policy makers, parents, and stakeholders hold educational leaders accountable for academic success and well-being of each student (Kelley & Dikkers, 2016). Managing and supporting school improvement is difficult for one person to address. As cited in Wang et al. (2017), it is more difficult for one person to possess all the knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead every aspect of schools; therefore, informal leadership from others is necessary to contribute to the effectiveness of schools (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Wang et al., 2014).

Democratic Leadership and Stakeholders

Using democratic approaches, authority to make decisions and participation opportunities in key decisions, is shared throughout school members and stakeholders (Delgado, 2014). Meaningful input and involvement from parents, teachers, and students in planning, implementing, and decision making should be relevant for leaders to do (Delgado, 2014). Educational leaders used to be known as managers because often they supervise all aspects of schools by themselves. Dambe and Moorad (2008) found "there has been a clear shift in leadership approaches from those where the leader is in control and commanding i.e., power-based leadership to one where there is empowerment" (p. 575). Not all teachers may have a voice in making decisions, serving on leadership teams, or serving as department leaders in schools. However, much of that is not the most effective way to successfully operate a school (Kelley & Dikkers, 2016). As the paradigm has shifted in education, not only are educational leaders and district office leaders held accountable and feel the pressure of educating students, but teachers as well. Teachers, students, parents, and all stakeholders are now encouraged to assist in decision making to help ensure student achievement and success is perceived. To increase student learning, creating a culture of sharing responsibility and leadership in schools, not merely among school members but collectively within the community, plays an important role (Louis et al., 2010).

According to Kelley and Dikkers (2016), "today, educational leadership is a collaborative effort distributed among a number of professionals in schools and districts" (p. 393). There needs to be a relationship between the role of the leader in each school and organizational learning (MacNeil et al., 2009). When educational stakeholders share leadership and the same vision, schools improve due to everyone having a clear and clarified understanding of what is expected.

In addition, Carson et al. (2007) explained, "when leadership is shared, a clear and unifying direction is well understood within the team" (p. 47).

Multiple Educational Leaders

Educational leaders used to be known as managers dominating the workplace; however, over time, this idea changed. Leaders are now held responsible for various aspects of schools on a day-to-day basis; thus, assistance and input from others are important to ensure all aspects of schools are functioning properly. Teachers are needed to ensure instruction is of high quality so that students may learn. However, some people may recognize multiple leaders in schools as a negative aspect. On the other hand, McIntyre and Foti (2013) have claimed "multiple leaders can be helpful through an increase in communication, the quality of information being circulated throughout the group, cooperation, and a lower susceptibility to group-think" (p. 48). Having other leaders within the organization can lead to more cooperation amongst the faculty and staff as a team.

Shared Leadership

It is suggested when schools operate democratically, teachers will be more likely to contribute to the development of schools in a positive way (Sergiovanni, 1999; Starrat, 2001). Therefore, leaders are encouraged to empower teachers and nurture their expertise and initiatives to benefit schools (Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005). Leadership can be shared formally and informally by educational leaders. Sharing leadership may have its greatest impact by reducing teacher isolation and increasing commitment (Pounder, 1999). Pounder (1999) suggested that democratic leaders who emphasize individual participation in school leadership have the greatest power to engender loyalty and commitment. Leithwood et al. (2009) have shown in their empirical analysis, purposeful or planned leadership distribution is more likely to

have positive impact on school development and change. Student achievement is necessary and an accountability piece for schools' performance; therefore, everyone needs to be involved in deciding on how to improve and move schools forward. Some researchers suggest that involvement in decision making, or leadership roles may have limited impact on student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Louis, 1997; Smylie et al., 2002). Additionally, in previous studies, stakeholders in schools implementing democratic school leadership acknowledged that teaching and learning situations had improved (Gamage, 1996; Sooksomchitra, 2004).

Democratic Communities

To improve schools, democratic communities are necessary. Sales et al. (2017) explained that "democratic leadership shifts influence away from the top of the organizational hierarchy towards the work teams and teachers themselves" (p. 255). Democratic leadership is a dispersed form of leadership which encourages teachers to have greater participation in policy planning and decision making (Day et al., 2000; Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005; Wheatley, 1992). Education reform attempts to ensure access and achievement of all children in schools possible when leadership is shared widely among members of a school community (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; Rayner, 2008). Democratic leadership is associated with reforming education and improving school (Glickman, 2003). A democracy is when most people within an organization have control (Glickman, 2003). Having a democracy is suggested within schools to have better results with teacher retention, morale, as well as student achievement. Glickman (2003) stated, "democracy is as much a theory of learning as it is a political theory; it is a theory when practiced in classrooms, schools show outstanding results in student achievement and advancement" (p. 304). Many political leaders

and educational leaders believe that education plays a critical role in promoting and sustaining emerging democracies (Kapstein & Converse, 2008). Educational leaders play a significant role in the success of schools, student achievement, as well as the overall climate and morale of schools (Kaleem et al., 2021). In fact, to assist in taking some of the pressure off the leader, leadership can be distributed to teachers to ensure the success of schools in reaching their goals and mission.

Key Attributes of a Democratic Leader. The key attributes of a leader are to have a clear vision, an ability to inspire others with that vision, a capacity to create new meanings and the ability to see the big picture and the skill of winning the commitment from others (Adair, 1983; Telford, 1996).

When leadership is shared, an individual's role may repeatedly shift from leader to follower as new events occur which require the expertise of team members. When shared leadership occurs across the organization, others are involved in decision making, then leadership is viewed as a concept of a team rather than an individual. (McIntyre & Foti, 2013, p. 47)

Darling-Hammond (2006) explained "teachers' leadership is a key factor in school improvement and can be encouraged through teacher professional development" (p. 305). As school improvement is an important factor of democratic leadership and accountability, teachers are needed to help improve schools through effective instruction which can be improved by attending professional development opportunities where the necessary collaboration takes place (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In fact, Kensler (2015) discussed democratic principles that should be used when it comes to having a sense of coherency within organizations. The principles Kensler (2015) referred to are: purpose and vision, dialogue and listening, integrity,

accountability, choice, individual and collective, decentralization, transparency, fairness and dignity, reflection, and evaluation. There are school communities, and within those communities are relationships among teachers, students, parents, and administrators. It is important to build positive working relationships to improve student achievement. Achievement for all students is possible when leadership is shared. Additionally, Sales et al. (2017) explained:

> When leadership is shared, it creates fair opportunity for all members in a school community to influence decisions and practices; it ensures individuals work together in diverse ways to make things happened, and it aims to achieve inclusion in all areas of school and beyond. (p. 255)

Leadership Teams. In schools, often there is a leadership team that consists of teachers, parents, and various stakeholders to help in the decision-making process and to offer their input that often an administrator may not think about. Kilicoglu (2018) explained when democratic approaches are utilized, all school members and stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, implementation processes, and are responsible and take ownership in the plan. Leaders working in conjunction with the leadership team in helping create relationships and trust can often lead to effective schools (Kilicoglu, 2018). The importance of sharing leadership responsibilities is so that everyone can exercise his or her expertise and share ownership in the operation of the school. Everyone is an expert at something, and no one thinks the same way, so it is important to welcome others' ideas to make schools more effective. Moreover, when people feel their input is valued, they begin to work harder as an employee for their school or organization (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). When people's ideas are valued, they feel happy to go to work, and when people are happy, the morale is usually high (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). Distributing leadership promotes participation in decision making and it

holds teachers accountable. Effectively operating a school is suggested to be done collectively in certain aspects; meanwhile, one way to manage an effective school is to employ democratic leadership (Kostirelioglu, 2017).

Purpose and Vision Within Schools. To have a true team of people involved in decision making, there should be a clear purpose and vision (Sales et al., 2017). Organizations operate effectively when everyone understands the why behind the purpose and the shared vision in knowing the direction they are headed. Individuals within the system should see and participate in developing the vision for their individual and collective enacting of the organization's purpose (Kensler, 2015). Kensler (2015) also supported that "purpose and vision shared from top down does not emulate democratic principles; democratic principles should develop and operate from within the system" (p. 10). It is the responsibility of educational leaders to create the atmosphere and climate for participation in developing a purpose and vision. They have the power to create the conversations needed that are related to purpose and vision. The idea is for school leaders, who design systems and processes all community members to participate in, knowing and sharing their personal vision and collaborating with others to develop a common vision that is truly shared (Lambert et al, 2002; Senge et al., 2012).

Democratic Community and Faculty Perception

Lahtero et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study to determine the aspects and views of principals and faculty members that are a part of the management team at both the elementary and secondary levels to see how many incorporate democratic leaderships. Additionally, researchers also conducted the study to see how many educational leaders include their students with democratic leadership regarding curriculum in their schools. The research method was a questionnaire. The participants, members of the leadership teams at the elementary and

secondary levels, were to evaluate the preconditions of democratic leadership in their schools. Most of the participants viewed democratic leadership as a delegation of predetermined tasks. The results strengthened the view of democratic leadership as an interaction among the leadership teams in both official and unofficial structures of the school. Additionally, Lahtero et al. (2017) found that when leaders dominate and lead alone, they are not distributing leadership and their schools become more dependent on their leadership actions.

Three of an educational leader's main functions should be having a vision, developing people, and making sure instruction is effective, but without having leadership style that believes in developing others, the leader may not be as effective. Mullick et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study of 308 teachers, and they suggested that leadership roles should be distributed throughout the school and should not reside in a single person. Mullick et al. (2013) also concluded that "teachers who are not in formal leadership positions, but active in leadership functions, are capable of influencing instructional practices in schools" (p. 152). There are teachers who want to be involved and included in decision making in their school. The more they are included, the more effective instruction could be. According to Chang (2011), most leaders value effective instruction, and most teachers value having input regarding schools and decisions within schools. Chang (2011) suggested, "distributed leadership not only has a positive influence on academics, but it also indirectly affects student achievement" (p. 491). Chang completed a quantitative study with 1,500 teachers to investigate their perceptions of democratic leadership. The teachers had positive results and positively affected academic achievement.

Research suggests that democratic leadership is encouraged within organizations (Kensler, 2015). Also, when teachers' input is included and valued, they produce effective instruction. Instruction and student learning are important for student achievement. Schools

thrive and become high-performing schools when all, including community stakeholders, are involved. Democratic leadership is where responsibilities are shared amongst schools' faculty and staff (Kosterelioglu, 2017). No one can operate an organization alone and be as effective as with a team of people (Wang et al., 2017). Community stakeholders, along with teachers, are suggested to be involved in the decision-making process as well (Delgado, 2014). Shambaugh (2017) validated that when people are included in decision making, they feel valued and are happy. Shambaugh (2017) explained "when employees are engaged, they feel a sense of belonging when they are at work" (p. 13). Shambaugh's study was to determine if inclusion is best when it comes to serving in leadership positions. Further, "the wider the net that a leader can cast to help more employees feel valued and included, the greater chance that leader will have at creating engaged teams" (p. 13). In addition, Patchen (1970) conducted a study to determine if including employees in decision making leads to success. He reported that "increased participation in decision making in the organization results in improved job satisfaction and student achievement, and greater commitment to the organization among employees" (p. 632). Teamwork is one of the important factors it takes to be an effective school. In addition, it may be important to engage others who think differently than the leader to cover all vital aspects of the school. Everyone is an expert at something, so it may be more beneficial to encourage people to use their expertise for the betterment of all. Not all leaders practice democratic leadership style, and not all teachers have the same perception of that style being utilized in their school.

One can assume serving in the role of a leader can be challenging and stressful at times. However, leadership behavior can often lead to success and less stress if the leadership style is utilized and shared effectively (Delgado, 2014). It is vital to first have a shared vision which will enable others to work collaboratively to educate students (Kensler, 2015). Not all leaders are

knowledgeable in how to create environments that foster democratic leadership where others are involved in decision making within the organization. In fact, Leech and Fulton (2008) suggested that educational leaders' preparation in institutions must be charged with developing programs that provide the opportunities that enhance potential leaders' skill to create learning organizations" (p. 630). Leech and Fulton's (2008) study was conducted to determine the relationship between teachers' perception of leadership behaviors of secondary school leaders and their perceptions of shared decision making practiced in their schools. They concluded there is a need for change in the educational system. Thus, distributing leadership roles throughout schools helps to establish better outcomes for students (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Wang et al., 2014). Improving education should be educators' number one goal so that students may succeed.

There is an idea that schools should have an atmosphere that is like a community. A sense of community amongst colleagues within an organization is where everyone is offered the opportunity to be involved and share ideas and concerns. Everyone should feel welcomed to share ideas and collaborate with colleagues. Leech and Fulton (2008) talked about various principles of leadership that help encourage employees to participate in sharing their ideas to improve the organization overall. Some of the principles that attribute to improving an organization include employee involvement improves job satisfaction as well as provides higher levels of morale and motivation. In addition, Leech and Fulton (2008) explained "other principles that attribute to improving an organization include more commitment to organizational goals and develop a more collaborative atmosphere among all employees" (p. 632). Leaders are ultimately responsible for schools and their instruction, operation, and ultimate success; therefore, leaders serve as important factors in supporting teachers within schools regarding student achievement and success (Kaleem et al., 2021). Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) explained,

"the leadership of the leader is known to be a key factor in supporting student achievement, but how that leadership is experienced and instructionally enacted are by teachers" (p. 458).

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities are related to the importance of teacher-to-teacher relationships and the way they work to improve instruction and student achievement. Instruction is crucial, as this is an important foundation to how students learn. Since students are the most precious product of education, then the most prized value should be the classroom teacher; therefore, the greatest influence on students' achievement is the classroom teacher (Allen et al., 2011; Clotfelter et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Educational leaders play a role in creating environments that are conducive to teachers truly interacting in a professional learning community. Studies have found that educational leaders play an important role in allocating time for teachers to meet and for providing increased opportunities for job-embedded professional development (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Research on professional learning communities suggested that shared leadership depends upon the support of the educational leader (Harris, 2008; Hord, 2009; Stoll et al., 2006). Teachers are the experts and have good ideas, so the more they are allowed the opportunity to collaborate, the more students will benefit. Teachers within the learning community can serve as mentors, mentees, coaches, advisors, and more.

Professional Learning Community Characteristics

Although educational leaders affect the success of professional learning communities within their schools, however, Thornton and Cherrington (2014) conducted a study that found not only does the educational leader influence professional learning communities but trust also has an impact on the effectiveness of professional learning communities. It is important that people trust each other to work efficiently and effectively together as a whole. Moreover, for the

professional learning teams to work, the leader must put some steps in place. There should be a focus and an understanding of the focus or goal, include others in decision making and leadership activities within the teams, as well as promote the importance of having collaborative relationships, as well as build the idea of the importance of having trust amongst each other (Stoll, 2011). Thornton and Cherrington (2014) suggested when there are trust amongst teachers as well as trust between teachers and leaders, there is usually success within schools. Bryk and Schneider (2003) have conducted studies for several years. They suggested that "relational trust is the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education and welfare of students" (p. 44). Thus, they stressed the importance of leaders building relationships and collaborative opportunities within their schools by using distributed leadership approaches. In addition, relational trust refers to respect amongst each other, level of competence, listening to each other, valuing input, and supporting and caring about for each other both personally and professionally to reach goals (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). Often teachers attend professional development conferences to enhance their knowledge and to focus on student learning, but not much focus is on teachers learning professionally as a team to foster continuous learning and change within schools. Therefore, research supports that learning depends on healthy, trusting relationships, especially in relation to adult learning that is critical to organizational learning in schools (Baumgartner, 2001; Bransford et al., 2000; Taylor, 2000).

It is advised that teachers have a culture of professional community that consists of trust and collaboration amongst each other (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). Additionally, having a professional community is more than just support; it includes shared values, a common focus on student learning, collaboration and sharing of best practices, and reflective dialogue (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Kruse et al., 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Erichsen and Reynolds (2019)

determined strong community refers to shared values, school pride, and mutual respect as they collaborate to work on plans and other needs of schools. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) expressed the need for teachers to successfully interact with each other as it requires initiatives from teachers and the leaders to create rich dialogue about improvement. In addition, professional community fosters collective learning of new practices when there is leadership and guidance from the leader. The more teachers collaborate about curriculum and factors that affect student learning, the higher student achievement will be and the less achievement gaps they will see in schools (Glickman, 2003).

Bryk and Schneider (2003) found in their study of teachers in Chicago that schools often struggle with student achievement when they lack trust and social interaction. Thus, there is a need to allow time for teachers to collaborate to build relationships and trust to better educate their students to be successful. After all, students are the most important and their success should be the focus of educators in schools. Not only if teachers are granted opportunities to collaborate the better student achievement will be, but it also helps with teacher retention in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). When teachers are happy, trust each other, and work well collaboratively, the more likely they will remain teaching at their schools; in turn, teacher retention affects student performance (Leech & Fulton, 2008).

Many teachers remember the leadership behaviors their leaders utilized while working with them. They remember the good behaviors as well as the behaviors that need changing. In addition, teachers may even remember the times they felt supported in working as a team or having the autonomy to teach their students and challenge them in the way they would like (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). On the other hand, the educational leaders are expected to understand the quality of the content that is being delivered to the students. In addition, there has

been research conducted that supports the expansion of including teachers in leadership roles (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

Democratic Leadership and School Culture

Brown (2004) defined organizational culture as a set of common values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms (p. 4). Organizational culture is not always as noticeable, but great culture can be found in shared relationships among colleagues, school environment, student, and teacher relationships, and sharing experiences together (Haberman, 2013). Some schools can be affected by low teacher morale and retention in schools due to teachers not having trusting, professional relationships amongst each other. There also could be times where teachers do not feel they have trusting and positive relationships with their leaders or having the autonomy within their schools to participate in the decision-making process in which all contribute to the success of schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Erichsen & Reynolds, 2019; Ladd, 2011). Teachers sometimes do not have the full autonomy to make decisions within their classrooms, but Miller (1981) suggested that teachers are more productive when they are involved in the decision-making process. Morale has been low, in some schools more than others, which could affect the retention rate of teachers in schools. Some teachers see the value of building relationships amongst each other, with their administrators, students, and parents.

School Culture and Teacher Morale. School culture can be positive or negative, depending on many factors. Moreover, positive school culture is conducive to professional satisfaction, effectiveness, morale, and creating an environment that maximizes student learning and fosters collaboration (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013). Thus, school culture partially determines the level of high or low morale in schools. Educational leaders play a critical role in developing and maintaining positive school culture and morale that contributes to a successful

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school (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Kaleem et al., 2021; Sergiovanni, 1999). The educational leader is the key to influencing working conditions by improving the school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1999). Additionally, relationships contribute to positive morale. An article written by Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) focused on the variables that contribute to schools' culture and climate, such as leaders have direct bearing on leader-teacher relations, trust, and shared leadership. According to Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), "teacher relationships in professional communities, collective responsibility, teachers' sense of personal efficacy, and the quality of instruction, all contribute to schools' culture" (p. 460). Teasley (2017) stated, "culture of schools is often taken for granted, but it is a subject that needs great focus and understanding of school-based professionals" (p. 3).

Leadership and Teacher Morale. Not only do professional and positive relationships play a role with teacher morale and retention in schools, but so do the leaders of schools and their leadership styles. There are different styles of leadership such as distributed, shared, laissez-faire, and democratic. They all focus on different aspects of leadership, but this literature review will focus more on democratic leadership and utilizing this style to include others in the decision-making process to increase teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teacher intent to stay. If those things stay positive, then hopefully student achievement and school improvement will increase. Kilicoglu (2018) explained that democratic leadership is the most effective approach to use when it comes to change and school improvement.

Morale is often referred to as the way people feel in a workplace. Bentley and Rempel (1970) defined morale as the way in which the need of a person is satisfied, and the person's perception of how the job has brought a state of satisfaction to fruition. In addition, as cited in Andrews' (1985) handbook on morale, morale is a state of mind that looks to achieve an

essential and shared function (Smith, 2010). Morale can be high or low, depending on many variables such as autonomy, relationships, and trust. The degree of trust and cooperation among school staff is distinct from other job conditions such as autonomy and may continue to be more important for teacher morale than conditions of the school or salary levels (Yee, 1990). However, today, morale is receiving more attention than ever. Morale has been researched and studied to determine the factors that it contributes to when it comes to teacher morale in schools (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). Thus, morale has become more of a buzz word in K-12 schools and is often linked to educational leaders being the people who have the most control, ensuring it is being portrayed in a positive light. Teacher morale is an important element in every educational setting (Bergerth, 1970). Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) explained "the advantage of high morale includes low turnover, less absenteeism, and a better academic environment for instruction" (p. 8). Willis and Varner (2010) explained, "teacher morale has an effect on student achievement" (p. 1).

If teachers are not motivated and happy to come to work, not only may students suffer academically from teachers not being at work consistently, but teacher morale may be low due to the various factors. Thus, motivation, effort, and job satisfaction can be linked to teacher morale (Huysman, 2008). Lack of recognition from educational leaders may also affect teacher morale in schools. Schools that have a system of recognition in place have high morale in schools (Andrews, 1985). In addition, researchers such as Andrews (1985) and Erichsen and Reynolds, (2019) have conducted studies and have concluded that teachers are more productive when they are given opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. There was a study conducted where 97% of the participants' indicated leadership is a major cause for high teacher morale (Huysman, 2008; Lumsden, 1998; Mackenzie, 2007; Miller, 1981). Scholars such as

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) explained the importance of having supportive educational leaders in schools for various reasons such as morale. There is a correlation between school culture and teacher morale. School culture has much to do with relationships, trust, and shared values. In fact, Erichsen and Reynolds (2019) explained "school culture confirms the centrality of trust and shared values boosting teacher morale and helping teachers endure challenging circumstances" (p. 2). In Miller's (1981) study, it was gathered that student learning and teacher morale were related to having either a positive or negative school culture based on respect, shared decision making, communication, and administrative support. On the other hand, Huysman (2008) found that low teacher morale was due to power not being distributed amongst them.

Lumsden (1998) defined morale as "a healthy school climate; additionally, a healthy school climate and high teacher morale tend to be related" (p. 2). A leader's ability to create a positive school climate and culture can affect teacher morale (Lumsden, 1998). Research conducted by Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) stated that through investigations, educational leaders are the people who establish the ground rules for the environment in schools, and that they are responsible for developing and maintaining high teacher morale. Additionally, there must be a positive, working relationship between teachers and their leaders to maintain high teacher morale within schools (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). Relationships between teacher to teacher and teacher to leaders are important in every aspect within schools. Erichsen and Reynolds (2019) explained, "if teachers feel respected and heard by administration and continue to embrace their school's mission, they may be better able to sustain their morale when working in a struggling school or district" (p. 3).

Morale and Achievement. Raising teacher morale is not only making teaching more

pleasant for teachers, but it also helps learning become more pleasant for the students (Lumsden, 1998). Having high teacher morale creates an environment that is more conducive to learning. Lumsden (1998) suggested there is a correlation between morale and achievement. "Individual's attitude toward work is associated with work performance; therefore, teacher satisfaction needs to be evident in order to achieve the goals of the organization" (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, p. 2). In addition, satisfaction with teaching is closely related to a high level of teacher morale (Folkins, 1976). Ellenberg (1972) found that where morale is high, schools often have an increase in student achievement. In fact, Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) explained that "schools that have effective leadership produce higher learning within schools" (p. 2). Leaders' behavior enhances student achievement (Evans & Johnson, 1990; Miskel et al., 1979; Thrust, 1980). Research supports that teacher morale directly affects student achievement (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995).

Teacher morale, positive, working relationships and trust are all important factors that help make teachers happy and satisfied at their jobs (Thornton & Cherrington, 2014; Shambaugh, 2017; and Erichsen & Reynolds, 2019). Low satisfaction and low teacher morale can lead to teacher burnout, decreased number of quality teachers, depression, as well as greater usage of sick leave days (Lumsden, 1998). It is important for educational leaders to ensure teacher morale is high in schools not only for their satisfaction, but for student achievement to continue to improve (Starrat, 2001). Teachers feeling burned out usually leads to poor attendance, which in turn, may affect instruction and student learning. Students' morale in schools can become low as well due to teachers' poor attendance due to teachers not being happy and satisfied on the job. On the other hand, teachers' morale can be low due to them not being a part of the decision-making process within their schools or not having any autonomy in their

classroom (Ingersoll, 1997). According to Delgado (2014), not only are relationships important between people within an environment, but morale can be low due to teachers teaching in schools with low socioeconomic areas where often students are not proficient academically.

Autonomy of Choice

Autonomy has been defined as the perceptions teachers have regarding them controlling their classrooms and their working environment (Pearson & Hall, 1993). Although autonomy has evolved and continues to evolve, educational leaders are encouraged to empower teachers to have the autonomy and choice of doing what is necessary to ensure their students are learning, as instruction is important (Kostereliglu, 2017). Educational leaders who assume all the responsibilities within a school are often burned-out and feel lonely; nevertheless, it is encouraged that leaders are to share responsibilities among teachers and stakeholders (Wang et al., 2017). Sharing responsibilities is important to empower school personnel with a sense of commitment and belonging (Kosterelioglu, 2017). However, research shows that teacher autonomy is the common denominator when it comes to teacher motivation, job satisfaction, stress level due to burnout, professionalism, and power (Brunetti, 2001; Kim & Loadman, 1994; Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Ulriksen, 1996). In fact, teacher autonomy is considered a crucial factor that affects teachers' motivation in whether to stay or leave the profession (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Some teachers love having autonomy; whereas some teachers feel it is a way for leaders not to do their jobs and pass along their responsibilities to teachers (Frase & Sorenson, 1992). Additionally, sharing responsibilities and teacher autonomy require a shared vision, trust among team members, combined with a willingness to lead and recognize open communication (Li et al., 2008). The success of educational changes is shaped by teachers' critical capacity, professional self-esteem, and degree of autonomy to innovate and be creative

(Gale & Densmore, 2003; Skrtic, 1995).

Researchers such as Melenyzer (1990) and Short (1994) explained that autonomy is a key factor when examining educational reforms and granting teachers autonomy and empowerment is the first place to start when seeking to solve today's educational problems. Teachers are the experts and the key factors that affect classroom instruction, learning and achievement; therefore, granting them the autonomy and empowerment to do what they feel is best to help students is beneficial. Choice also relates to democratic principles, as it allows people to have the power to do what they feel is best. In fact, distributing and sharing power is what democracy is about (Kensler, 2015). Kensler (2015) stated, "the democratic principle of choice refers to individuals having the opportunity to make choices that directly affects their work and learning" (p. 14). Having a choice also relates to the interests of people and gives them power and autonomy to do their jobs. Thus, autonomy is one factor that contributes to teachers' motivation which in turn has a correlation with job satisfaction (Khmelkov, 2000; Losos, 2000; White, 1992).

Additionally, choice appears to be a critical element of student engagement that results in higher levels of learning for students as well (Fredricks et al., 2004). Fredricks et al. (2004) defined teacher autonomy as "the ability teachers have to make decisions in their classrooms with their students; nevertheless, support of the professionalism of teachers goes back to trust" (p. 60). Teachers probably feel they are qualified and are experts in the instructional process to make decisions on their own to best help students. Thus, leaders should trust their teachers, and teachers should trust their leaders to make the best decisions for the betterment of schools. This goes along with the principle of integrity. Possessing trust and integrity as characteristics are great and may often be hard to portray to others. Kensler (2015) listed integrity as a democratic principle. The integrity of educational leaders makes a difference to teachers and influences the

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learning culture of a school (Blase & Blase, 2001). Teachers and educational leaders should be given the authority to make key decisions that affect their school. Using the top-down model idea affects teachers' willingness to be committed to their jobs and to professionalism (Firestone & Bader, 1992).

Teacher Autonomy

When educational leaders lead in an authoritative manner, or when leaders direct, monitor, or control, teachers are not happy when they are not given autonomy to do what they feel they are competent to do (Hulpia et al., 2009). Most of this idea came along with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 where more federal level leaders had authority to make decisions pertaining to standardized tests (Jeong & Luschei, 2018). Because the government had authority and focused on high-stakes tests to help schools improve, there often were not opportunities for teachers to have flexibility in their classrooms. Moreover, autonomy is important for several reasons. Autonomy may help with teacher morale, motivation, and satisfaction in schools. Additionally, empowering teacher autonomy may have an influence on teacher retention. Ingersoll (1997) suggested that increasing autonomy helps with teaching educational standards as well as decision making. Teachers' ability to participate in some decision-making process is determined to help schools overall, more specifically student achievement increases, which is what accountability is about. Teacher autonomy, retention, and participation are all a part of democratic leadership style.

Although there is a need for teacher autonomy in schools, there may have been some change in teachers' abilities to participate in some decision making in schools. This most likely changed when the government and educational system's administrators decided they would determine when and how standards would be taught and dictate various operations of how

schools would operate relating to the No Child Left Behind Act.

Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Intent to Stay. Research suggested there is some correlation between teacher autonomy and teacher intent to stay (Firestone & Bader, 1992). Some teachers may enjoy having autonomy and power in their classrooms and within their schools. However, not all leaders entrust the same level of autonomy to teachers. Some leaders realize the importance of what professionalism and trust in teachers have on the effect of students. There are some leaders who seek input in decision making and professional choices concerning students and more leaders are encouraged to do the same.

> If teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students as doctors and lawyers do for their patients and clients; and the freedom to do such has been defined by some as teacher autonomy. (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005, p. 38-39)

Power and autonomy are important not only for educational leaders, but for teachers as well. It is encouraged to collaborate to make decisions that affect schools holistically. Usually, teachers have influence on textbook selections and classroom strategies just to name a few. It is encouraged that teachers should be included in collaborating with their leaders to make decisions relating to curriculum, instruction, and scheduling (Willner, 1990). Collaborating regarding decision making and various other decisions that must be made help build and nurture positive relationships and alter the team approach (Ingersoll et al., 1997). Teacher autonomy and authority are crucial to the academic process and success in schools. Ingersoll et al. (1997) expressed that many advocates for teacher autonomy argue:

> Teachers will not only make better informed decisions about educational issues than

district or state officials, but that top-down decision making often fails precisely because it lacks the support of those whose are responsible for the implementation and success of the decision. (p. 7)

When trust and support are not valued and portrayed, teachers often leave their school and apply to work in other schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Haberman, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003). In turn, this could create a retention problem which could possibly affect student learning and achievement. When there is constant turnover in teacher attrition, students most likely are not learning as effectively due to the inconsistency of having teachers. Leaders often face difficulties with retaining highly qualified teachers. Additionally, Greenlee and Brown (2009) explained that "school leaders face a difficult challenge of finding teachers who are highly qualified, committed, and prepared to ensure that all students achieve at levels mandated by *No Child Left Behind*" (p. 96). Additionally, teachers transfer schools or leave the profession due to the lack of support from their leader, family relocating, or obtaining new positions with other school districts. Brown (1996) talked about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that often teachers feel regarding their jobs. Through Brown's (1996) research, he discovered that some teachers leave the profession due to their own personal growth or due to the lack of recognition and respect for what they do day-to-day. Jones and Watson (2017) explained, "teacher turnover refers to the fact that teachers either quit teaching or transfer to other schools" (p. 44). Some teachers move due to high levels of poverty within the school, or wider achievement gaps due to students being impoverished or academically low (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). Effective, highly qualified teachers are necessary because teachers affect instruction. Therefore, it is important that educational leaders put in place conditions that will make teachers want to stay. Retention can be viewed as important because teachers are needed for instructional purposes.

Instruction is important as it relates to student achievement, and turnover causes disruptions and affects academics due to the inconsistency of teachers within schools. Additionally, there are other factors that may drive teachers to leave their schools such as low pay, frustration with administration, old facilities, lack of input with decision making in what they teach, as well as safety (Erichsen & Reynolds, 2019). Nevertheless, educational leaders can also make a difference in teachers remaining working in schools. Experiencing discipline problems, inadequate administrator support, lack of autonomy, and heavy workload are amongst the most common factors that influence teachers' decision to leave (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Haberman, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003). Additionally, teacher satisfaction is important in certain aspects. Lack of satisfaction and high stress levels often can lead to burnout (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). It is impossible to please everyone, but to allow teachers the autonomy and empowerment to make decisions, could contribute to satisfaction and teacher intent to stay. Thus, Perie and Baker (1997) conducted a study where teachers identified good leadership, administrative support, positive school culture, and teacher autonomy are all that contribute to high teacher satisfaction.

Greenlee and Brown (2009) conducted a study that consisted of 97 teachers (77 female and 20 males) teachers in elementary, middle, high, and alternative schools. The study involved a survey designed to explore teachers' perceptions.

> It was determined that teachers will stay employed in schools, even with higher numbers of disadvantaged students, if leaders would allow them the autonomy, resources, and funds to attend professional development that will not only enhance their learning, but help them make an impact on students, and obtain more authority in decision making. (p. 100)

Additionally, there are more reasons why teachers often do not remain in education. Not focusing much on low salaries, researchers are constantly finding that teacher dissatisfaction and turnover are more related to job features like autonomy or the quality of administration than by pay, class size, or the physical condition of the school or classroom (Ladd, 2011; Loeb et al., 2005; Renzulli et al., 2011; Torres, 2016). Leaders' behaviors are factors that are critical to teachers' intent to stay. Some teachers may aspire to work with leaders who create a positive school culture; create conditions that enhance the staff's desire and willingness to focus energy on achieving educational excellence; demonstrates integrity and well-reasoned educational beliefs based on an understanding of teaching and learning; and provides opportunities for teachers to think, plan, and work together (Greenlee & Brown, 2009).

Working Conditions and Intent to Stay

It is often difficult for school leaders to ensure students receive effective instruction as is mandated by *No Child Left Behind* requirements in challenging schools when they do not have highly qualified teachers willing to stay and work in such settings. Working conditions and support from administrators are among the top reasons why teachers leave (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Ingersoll, 2000). In fact, Borman and Dowling (2008) have conducted over 34 studies on retention of teachers in schools. Over those studies, they have found that networking, collaborating, and administrative support are all key factors. It has also been found that some teachers leave due to the lack of professionalism of others, the lack of recognition, or the lack of autonomy they have within schools (Natale, 1993; Pearson & Hall, 1993).

Teachers often stay at their perspective schools based on the level of respect, trust, and collaborative experience they have with their colleagues and their administrators. Researchers such as Simon and Johnson (2015) have found that teachers who are employed at rural, poor

schools, establishing positive relationships is crucial. Therefore, teachers who have opportunities

to collaborate and to network in schools with high needs are most likely to stay; thus, it is

important for administrators and teachers to make sure success is a part of their daily routine

(Greenlee & Brown, 2009). Although salaries, insufficient resources, and lack of administrative

support play a vital role in retaining teachers, the educational leader is the key to influencing

working conditions by improving school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1999).

According to Shaw and Newton (2014), "one can pour all the money in the world into training

new crops of teachers to pass mandates to assure high quality, but if schools do not have leaders

who can cultivate and retain great teachers, the effort is amiss" (p. 106).

Jones and Watson (2017) conducted a study that consisted of 100 teachers from the

American Association of Christian Schools to determine teachers' perceptions of educational

leaders' behavior. Indeed, the leader has been proven to be a tremendous influence when it

comes to teachers (Jones & Watson, 2017). Working climate and support from leaders make a

difference in their leadership style. Often leaders are unsure how or when to use certain

leadership styles for the betterment of people and their schools. The implications of the study by

Clifton (2010) suggested that "a school leader must develop a thorough understanding of

contemporary, effective leadership practices and choose the style that best fits his or her

personality, teaching faculty, and the needs of the school" (p. 96). Leadership styles impact the

perceptions of teachers in either a positive or negative manner (Jones & Watson, 2017).

According to Pugh and Hickson (2007), "leaders must always adapt their behaviors to take

account of the persons they lead" (p. 137). Additionally, research by Eddins (2012) results

concurred that educational leaders' leadership styles which include behaviors "that attribute to

care, cooperation, collaboration, buy-in, vision and other aspects that involve security and

belongingness, are essential for motivation and growth for teachers" (p. 119).

Cheah et al. (2011) conducted a study in Malaysia to investigate how democratic leaders work to empower teachers' job satisfaction. Through their research, they found that today's schools require a style of leadership different from the traditional top-down, autocratic style. Additionally, there is an increase in the complexity of the educational system, which in turn shows that it is impossible that one person has all the knowledge, skills, and abilities that would enable him or her to complete all the requirements as a leader according to Cheah et al. (2011).

Job Satisfaction

Promoting teacher leadership may help schools overall with instruction because their trained levels of expertise are shared and leads to students learning more effectively. Teachers participating in leadership often leads to job satisfaction and school improvement Hulpia, et al., 2009). Effective instruction and school improvement are crucial factors that help students learn and the school to be viewed as being effective and having high performing students (Hulpia et al., 2009). Moreover, organizational commitment and shared leadership result in job satisfaction and the effectiveness of school improvement (Hulpia et al., 2009). Ladd (2011) conducted a study with public school teachers in North Carolina. Ladd found that teachers were more committed to their jobs when they felt trusted and respected by their leader. It was also determined that teachers were more committed when they have the support of their leaders when it comes to discipline, as well as when they have input in decision making. In addition, Hulpia et al. (2009) conducted a study using a questionnaire that was administered to 1,770 teachers and teacher leaders in 46 secondary schools. They found that shared leadership and cohesion of leadership support leads to job satisfaction.

Although democratic leadership has been around for years, it has not been effectively and

frequently utilized in schools or organizations as much as research is suggesting it should be used today. Democratic leadership is the dominant leadership idea of the moment, even though its origin can be traced back to the field of organizational theory in the mid-1960s and possibly even further. While the idea of shared, collaborative, or participative leadership is far from new, distributed leadership theory has now provided a new view (Harris, 2011). Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) discussed that "some leadership was distributed during the mid-1980s, but during the early 90s, teachers were starting to be included in decision making but it was only a small amount due to weak implementation of leadership being distributed" (p. 461). There once was a time when schools' leaders did not ask for others' input, and there are some leaders who utilize a single leader style today. However, it is no longer suggested that schools operate from a one-person leadership style.

Summary

Democratic leadership has been around for many years which focuses on a collaborative approach where other employees have the autonomy to participate and share ideas for the betterment of the organization. Everyone within an organization is held accountable, especially teachers, principals, and other educational leaders, in ensuring students are learning the necessary skills to be successful in school and throughout life. Therefore, operating a school alone may not be as effective and as beneficial overall. Meaningful input from parents, teachers, and stakeholders should be a priority for leaders (Delgado, 2014). A collaborative effort among professionals may help change the world of academia. Collaborative decision making, allowing input and autonomy, may help with morale, intent to stay, as well as student learning.

Because education has shifted and more power and leadership roles are encouraged amongst all in schools, a democratic leadership style is encouraged for leaders to use within

schools and organizations. Democratic leaders share responsibility by empowering others to participate in decision making. When leaders utilize democratic leadership, they grant teachers autonomy as well as empower teachers and stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process.

When democratic leadership practices are utilized, faculty, staff and stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process and may take ownership of the school's vision and goal (Kilicoglu, 2018). When all are involved, there are results in job satisfaction and school improvement (Hulpia et al., 2009). Additionally, sharing leadership may increase commitment as well (Pounder, 1999). Meanwhile, professional learning communities are vital for teachers to work together and develop relationships.

School culture is important as it relates to teacher morale. Educational leaders play a key role in school culture and influencing working conditions that improve school culture. Positive culture relates to teacher satisfaction which is also related to teacher morale (Folkins, 1976). Using democratic leadership style may lead to higher morale with teachers and school employees. Most teachers like to have autonomy in their schools, and when they are granted such, they are usually happy to come to work and their level of satisfaction is higher (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). When teachers are happy to come to work, morale is high, and they collaboratively work together to help their schools become more effective. Teacher satisfaction and happiness create a sense of community, and communities are vital for the improvement of schools.

Not only may morale be high, but teachers are more likely to remain working at their current schools. When teachers are collaborating effectively as a team, teachers' intent to stay remains high which may affect students.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay in public schools in Alabama. Teachers play a role in educating students and their academic success. Thus, it may be beneficial for principals to seek ways to encourage teachers to be committed as well as to remain teaching at their present school. Educational leaders are ultimately responsible for school improvement. "The role of the principal has become more complex, from the principal as an instructional leader to the role of transformational leader" (Karabina, 2016, para. 1). Some leaders' leadership style varies based on several aspects. Because leaders play several roles on a day-to-day basis, it is usually difficult to complete all tasks alone effectively. Leaders' leadership styles affect culture and climate of schools which affects teacher morale, commitment, and intent to stay (Haberman, 2013). Principals' relationship with teachers affects the attitudes of teachers toward school and the climate (Karabina, 2016). Thus, successful leaders focus on building relationships and motivating people within their school (Karabina, 2016). "Teachers' job satisfaction is seen as a primary dependent variable as it relates to the effectiveness of schools" (Karabina, 2016, para. 2). Educational leaders play a significant role in maintaining positive morale and culture in schools (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1999). If teacher morale is high and teachers are happy to teach at their school, then usually their intent to stay is higher, and they are committed, which directly affects student achievement (Glickman, 2003; Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). To increase student achievement, leaders should create a culture of empowered leadership and decision making (Louis et al., 2010).

Design

The research design is a quantitative, cross-sectional design. The data was collected via a

survey instrument comprised on four multi-item scales: democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intention to stay. The research questions were addressed with path analyses for a mediation model specifying democratic community as the predictor or independent variable and teacher morale as the mediator variable. The first path analysis had teacher commitment as the dependent or outcome variable. The second path analysis had teacher intention to stay as the outcome or dependent variable. Multiple linear regression was used for both analyses.

For the mediation model with teacher commitment as the outcome variable, three linear multiple regressions were performed to test for the direct and indirect (via teacher morale) effects of democratic community on teacher commitment. First, democratic community was regressed on teacher commitment. Second, democratic community was regressed on morale, and both democratic community and morale were regressed on teacher commitment.

For the mediation model with teachers' intent to stay as the outcome variable, three linear multiple regressions were performed to test for the direct and indirect (via teacher morale) effects of democratic community on teachers' intent to stay. Democratic community was regressed on teachers' intention to stay. Second, democratic community was regressed on morale, and both democratic community and morale were regressed on teacher intention to stay.

Research Questions

This study intended to answer the following questions:

1. Is democratic community associated with teacher commitment?

2. Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher commitment?

3. Is democratic community associated with teacher intent to stay?

4. Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher intent to stay?

Participants

The participants consisted of public-school teachers who teach in Alabama.

Measures

The instrument for this study consisted of four measures: teacher morale, teacher commitment, teacher intent to stay, and the WorldBlu School Survey (WBSS) as the measure of democratic community. Each of the four measures has data that supported its reliability and validity to use in schools.

Five questions were used to measure teacher morale, each with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 - almost never, 6 - almost always). These 5 questions were designed to measure the climate and how teachers feel in schools. Based on the previous researcher's findings, the instrument was a reliable instrument as indicated by Cronbach's alpha of .86. The validity of the instrument was reported as .90 (Hart et al., 2000).

Six questions were used to measure teacher commitment, each with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 - almost never, 6 – almost always). These 6 questions were designed to measure the level of teacher commitment in their perspective schools. Based on the previous researcher's findings, the instrument was a reliable instrument as indicated by construct reliability of 0.90. The validity of the instrument (average variance extracted) was reported at 0.61 (Jo, 2014).

Five questions were used to measure teacher intent to stay, each with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 – almost never, 6 – almost always). These 5 questions were designed to measure the likelihood of teachers returning to their school. Based on the previous

researcher's findings, the instrument was a reliable instrument as indicated by the composite reliability of 0.954. The validity of the instrument (average variance extracted) was reported at 0.696 (Sudibjo & Suwarli, 2020).

Eight questions were used to measure democratic community, each with a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1 – almost never, 6 – almost always). These 8 questions were designed to measure the systems and processes within schools. The WBSS instrument was used with permission. Based on the previous researcher's findings, it was a highly reliable instrument as indicated by the Cronbach 's alpha of .97 (Kensler et al., 2005).

Data Collection

With Institutional Review Board approval, a letter of invitation was emailed to public school teachers in Alabama as well as to public school principals in Alabama to share with their teachers regarding a research study to explore their experiences and perceptions as a teacher in Alabama. The letter explained the purpose of the study and there is no anticipated risk in participating in the anonymous online survey. It also explained there is no cost to participate, and participants will not directly benefit. The participants were notified that the survey will take about 20 minutes of their time.

Data Analysis

Research Question	Data Gathered	Data Analysis
Is democratic community associated with teacher commitment?	Teacher survey responses to democratic community questions that are aggregated using Jamovi	Linear multiple regression using Jamovi
Does teacher morale mediate	Teacher survey responses to	Three multiple linear

the relationship between democratic community and teacher commitment?	teacher commitment questions that are aggregated using Jamovi	regressions using Jamovi
Is democratic community associated with teacher intent to stay?	Teacher survey responses to teacher intent to stay questions that are aggregated using Jamovi	Linear Regression using Jamovi
Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher intent to stay?	Teacher survey responses to teacher morale questions that are aggregated using Jamovi	Three multiple linear regressions using Jamovi

Ethical Considerations

An informational letter was emailed to participants before participating in the study. Participants were made aware that all responses are anonymous and that the responses will be analyzed at the aggregate level only. Participants were also informed that they could stop the survey at any time for any reason.

Assumptions

One assumption of the study was that the participants answered the survey honestly. This assumption was reasonable given the informed consent of all study participants, which ensured that their responses would remain confidential and be analyzed at the aggregate level only. Another assumption of the study was that developing understanding of the extent to which democratic community directly and indirectly affects teacher commitment and teacher intention

to stay will inform decision making about retaining and growing the teacher workforce in Alabama. A third assumption is that the delimitations of the study were not detrimental to the assumption that the results can inform decision making.

Delimitations

This study is specific to public school teachers in Alabama. The dataset was cross-sectional due to time. The mediation model was limited to two predictor variables – democratic community and teacher morale – and two dependent variables – teacher commitment and teachers' intent to stay – due to the chosen theoretical framework. Lastly, the population was limited to teachers who teach in a public school in Alabama due to time and financial resource constraints.

Limitations

This study was limited in terms of measurement validity, internal validity, and external validity. The limitation in terms of measurement validity is mono-source bias, which can occur when all data are collected using a single instrument. The cross-sectional nature of the dataset is the source of numerous threats to internal validity, namely the maturation and history threats. Thus, the results cannot demonstrate a causal relationship. The threat to external validity was the sample selection method, which was non-random. Also, the results cannot be generalized to the population of public-school teachers in Alabama.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay in public schools in Alabama. The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. Is democratic community associated with teacher commitment?

2. Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher commitment?

3. Is democratic community associated with teacher intent to stay?

4. Does teacher morale mediate the relationship between democratic community and teacher intent to stay?

Participants

Public K-12 teachers in Alabama were invited to take an online survey. The survey link was sent to principals to share with teachers in their building, and the survey link was shared on social media (Facebook) to seek participants.

Chapter 4 includes a description of the organization of data collected and the results of quantitative analysis. Following a narrative description of procedures undertaken to organize and clean data collected for this dissertation, there are four additional sections that include description of the findings from four different perspectives. The four sections include a description of the profile characteristics of the human subjects participating in the study, descriptive statistics concerning the four variables included in the study, tests of statistical assumptions, and hypothesis testing. The profile characteristics include an ordinal range grouping of experience levels, the categorization of gender identity as nominal variables constrained to man and woman, the categorization of race as nominal datapoints including

White, African American/Black, Hispanic or Latino, and not identified, and the categorization of locale as the nominal responses rural, suburban, urban, and other. Profile characteristics are reported according to frequencies, using count and percentages as measures for profile characteristics of human subjects.

Descriptive statistics are also included. Descriptive statistics included are teacher commitment, teacher morale, teacher intention to stay, and magnitude of democratic community alignment. Descriptive statistics include mean as a measure of central tendency, standard deviation as a measure of dispersion of the data, and skewness and kurtosis as measures of posterior distribution. Tests for assumptions were performed for each research measure. The tests included the Durbin-Watson test for autocorrelation, variance inflation factor and tolerance as measures of multicollinearity, the Shapiro-Wilk as a test of normality based on the residuals for each regression model, and Q-Q plots for standardized residuals and theoretical quantiles to measure for homoscedasticity. The chapter concluded with hypotheses tests. Simple linear regression models were used for Research Question 1 and Research Question 3. A bootstrapping procedure was applied to formally test the mediation model, particularly concerning the direct and indirect effects of democratic community alignment and teacher morale. The results were mixed and while there was statistical significance found in the hypothesis tests for Research Question 1 and Research Question 3, as well as the direct effects in Research Question 2 and Research Question 4, there was a lack of statistical significance in the indirect effects.

Data Cleaning, Organizing, and Preparation

The dataset was cleaned, organized, and prepared prior to running any statistical procedures. The dataset was reviewed in Jamovi, a statistical analysis software package, to determine whether there were instances of extensive data missing from the dataset or if patterns

existed in the dataset that could be attributed to fraudulent responses (Love et al., 2023).

Fraudulent responses would be those where there were patterns in the data where the same point

was selected for each item or that the responses selected by human subjects ascended or

descended. There did not appear to be any instances of extensive missing data or fraudulent data

in the dataset. Composite variables were then created from the individual items used to measure

the variables in the study. The composite variables were created from a sum of the items used to

measure each variable for each case.

The data was then reviewed to determine whether outliers or influential data existed.

Cook's distance was used to determine the existence of influential data. Cook's distance was

determined for six regression models. The models included democratic community alignment as

a predictor of teacher commitment and teacher intention to stay, teacher morale as a predictor of

teacher commitment and teacher intention to stay, and democratic community alignment and

teacher moral both as predictors of teacher commitment and teacher intention to stay. Table 1

includes the results describing the minimum and maximum Cook's distance statistics for cases

by regression model. None of the results included a maximum score of *Cook's d* > 1.00.

Therefore, there are no influential cases in the data.

Table 1

Minimum and Maximum Cook's Distance Statistics by Regression Model

	DC -> TC	TM -> TC	DC & TM -> TC	DC -> TI	TM -> TI	DC & TM -> TI
Minimum	3.09e-8	5.73e-7	5.43e-7	1.85e-9	1.07e-7	1.83e-8
Maximum	0.107	0.0826	0.0882	0.0553	0.0482	0.0637

Profile Characteristics

Following the cleaning, organizing, and preparation of data for analysis, analysis

commenced with an analysis of the profile characteristics of participants in the study. The four

profile characteristics for which data was collected were the years of teaching experience held by participants, gender identity, race, and location. Frequency statistics were used for the purpose of describing profile characteristics because all four of the variables were categorical. Frequencies are appropriate because they support the reporting of the number of human subjects self-reporting for each category. Percentages and counts were used as the statistics measuring for each characteristic. Table 2 includes evidence that for the majority of participants, there was only nine years or less of teaching experience, with respondents in the 6-9 year range the most frequent. As 82.0% of participants were women, the sample was skewed toward including mainly women. While White was the most frequent race at 54.7%, 40.6% of participants were Black, so while the majority was White, Black individuals overrepresented for their race. The most frequent location for participants was rural at 48.6%. However, there was a relatively even split between individuals from a rural location and those from a suburban or urban location, with the frequency of participants from suburban or urban locations being 47.7%. Therefore, the profile characteristics are evidence that the findings of this study would be most applicable to transfer to populations where most teachers have been teaching for less than 10 years, are women, are either White or Black, and who are from virtually any location.

Table 2

Frequencies for the Profile Characteristics of Teaching Experience, Gender Identity, Race, and Location

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Teaching Experience			
0-3	22	10.4 %	10.4 %
3-5	25	11.8 %	22.2 %
6-9	94	44.3 %	66.5 %
9-12	20	9.4 %	75.9 %
12-15	27	12.7 %	88.7 %
15+	24	11.3 %	100.0 %
Gender Identity			

Woman	168	82.0 %	82.0 %
Man	37	18.0 %	100.0 %
Race			
African American/Black	86	40.6 %	40.6 %
European American	1	0.5 %	41.0 %
Hispanic or Latino	2	0.9 %	42.0 %
White or Caucasian	116	54.7 %	96.7 %
Not Identified	7	3.3 %	100.0 %
Location			
Rural	102	48.6 %	48.6 %
Suburban	44	21.0 %	69.5 %
Urban	56	26.7 %	96.2 %
Other	8	3.8 %	100.0 %

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for teacher commitment, teacher morale, teacher intentions to stay, and democratic community alignment were calculated. As a measure of central tendency, the mean scores were $M = 25.70$ for teacher commitment ($SD = 3.06$), $M = 18.00$ for teacher morale ($SD = 4.71$), $M = 16.80$ for teacher intentions to stay ($SD = 5.74$), and $M = 37.90$ for democratic community alignment ($SD = 10.40$). The mean is the summed composite variables measuring commitment, morale, intent to stay, and democratic community. The items were summed for each variable. A central tendency is the mean score of the composite variable. The measures obtained are used to assess each variable total score and show the data relationship with the average of the data collected. These scores were used to calculate the coefficient of variation for the variables used in the study. The coefficient of variation is the ratio of standard deviation over mean. The score is used to better understand the relation of dispersion of central tendency in the dataset (Lovie, 2005). Teacher commitment had the lowest amount of variation, with a coefficient of 11.91%, while teachers' intent to stay had the greatest amount of variation at 34.17%. Teacher morale was 26.17%, while democratic community alignment was 27.44%.

These findings are evidence of distance in variance between most of the variables, except for teacher morale and democratic community alignment. The findings for skewness were evidence of a slight negative skew with each of the variables, where the greatest skew exists with teacher morale (*SKEW* = -0.45), and the least skew exists with teacher intention to stay (*SKEW* = -0.21). The findings for kurtosis were evidence of a slight platykurtic shape to the posterior distribution of the data. Incidentally, the lowest amount of kurtosis was in teacher morale (*KURT* = -0.34) and the greatest amount of kurtosis was in teacher intentions to stay (*KURT* = -0.92). The threshold for skew and kurtosis is usually -2 and +2. Additionally, there is also a method of determining a z-score for skewness and kurtosis (George & Mallery, 2019). However, none of the findings for skewness and kurtosis included evidence of a high enough level to further investigate the possibility that an extreme skew or extreme kurtosis exists to such an extent that the fidelity of the data should be investigated further. Nonetheless, tests for statistical assumptions were completed.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Democratic Community Alignment, Teacher Morale, Teacher Commitment, and Teacher Intentions to Stay

	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Mean	SD	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
Commitment	25.70	3.06	-0.27	0.17	-0.62	0.33
Morale	18.00	4.71	-0.45	0.17	-0.34	0.33
IntentStay	16.80	5.74	-0.21	0.17	-0.92	0.33
Democratic Community	37.90	10.40	-0.33	0.17	-0.57	0.34

Tests for Statistical Assumptions

The statistical assumptions for regression were tested. The five statistical assumptions for regression include a linear distribution of the data, normality of the data, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, homoscedasticity. The linear distribution of the data was assessed using a boxplot to illustrate the placement of cases on an x-y plot. Normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality. Multicollinearity was determined by using the VIF score and its reciprocal, tolerance. Autocorrelation was determined based on the results of the Durbin-Watson test. Homoscedasticity was assessed using a Q-Q plot with standardized residuals as the y-axis and theoretical quantiles as the x-axis. While the tests for multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and homoscedasticity were not necessary for the regression models for Research Question 1 and Research Question 3, as there was only one predictor variable in each model, the tests for assumptions were still presented to follow procedures. While the test of the assumption of normality failed for Research Question 3, a non-parametric alternative was selected to examine the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay.

Assumptions Testing for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 is concerned with the extent to which democratic community alignment predicts teacher commitment. The assumptions tests for Research Question 1 supported the use of linear regression in the study. The scatterplot supports the existence of a linear relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment (Figure 3). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test included $S\text{-}W = 0.99$ ($p = 0.05$), supporting the normality of the data as the results were only slightly $p < 0.05$. The Durbin-Watson test findings included $D\text{-}W = 2.00$ ($p = 0.96$). This is because there was only one predictor variable. The findings for the tests of multicollinearity did not support the existence of a remarkable level of multicollinearity ($VIF = 1.00$, $tolerance = 1.00$) because again, there is only one predictor variable. The findings from the Q-Q plot for standardized residuals and theoretical quantiles

were evidence that the assumption for homoscedasticity was not violated (Figure 2).

Figure 3

Scatterplot of the Relationship between Democratic Community Alignment and Teacher Commitment

Figure 4

Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residuals and Theoretical Quantiles

Assumptions Testing for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 involves the indirect influence of teacher morale as a mediator of the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment. Bootstrapping is used for the purpose of data analysis. Therefore, assumptions concerning the distribution of the data are not made.

Assumptions Testing for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 is concerned with the extent to which democratic community alignment predicts teacher intentions to stay. The assumptions tests for Research Question 3 supported the use of linear regression in the study. The scatterplot supports the existence of a linear relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment (Figure 3). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test included $S\text{-}W = 0.98$ ($p = 0.01$) fails the assumptions test for normality. Therefore, a non-parametric test was used. The Durbin-Watson test findings included $D\text{-}W = 1.81$ ($p = 0.17$). This is because there was only one predictor variable. The findings for the tests of multicollinearity did not support the existence of a remarkable level of multicollinearity ($VIF = 1.00$, $tolerance = 1.00$) because again, there is only one predictor variable. The findings from the Q-Q plot for standardized residuals and theoretical quantiles were evidence that the assumption for homoscedasticity was not violated (Figure 4).

Figure 5

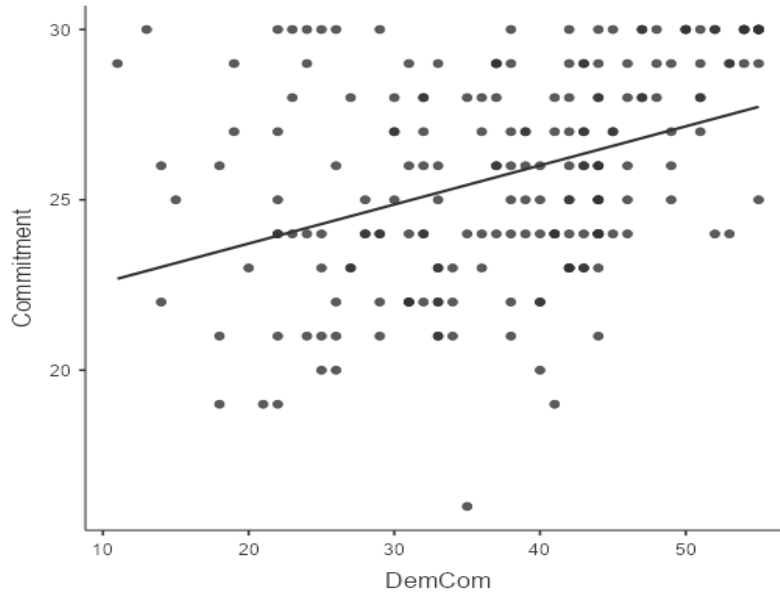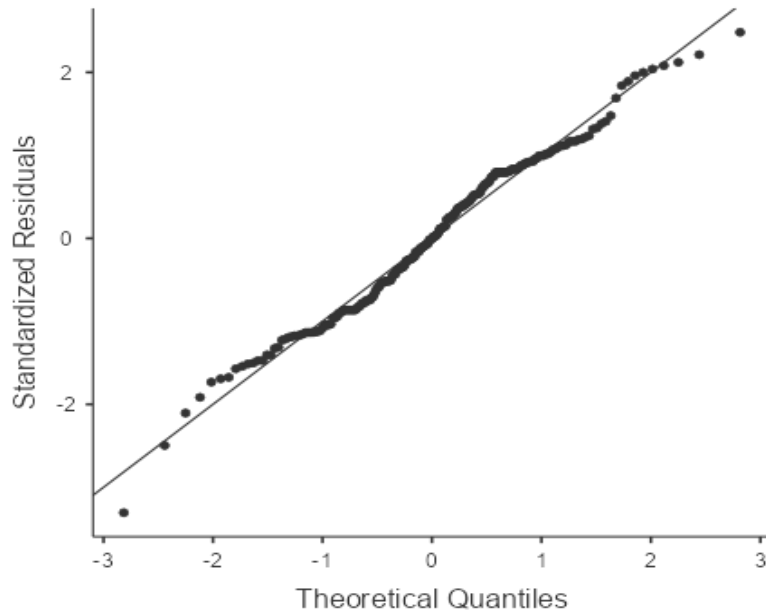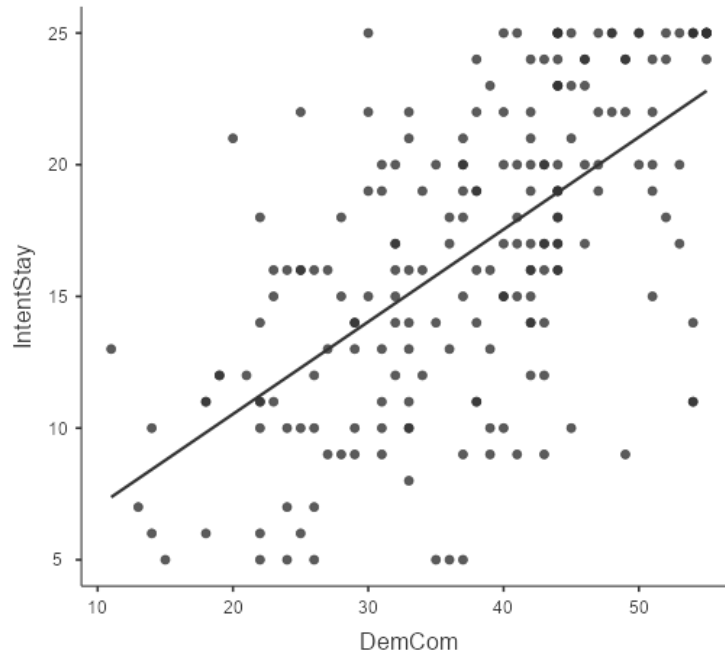*A Scatterplot of the Relationship between Democratic Community Alignment and Teacher Intentions to Stay*

Figure 6

*Q-Q Plot of Standardized Residuals and Theoretical Quantiles **Assumptions Testing for***
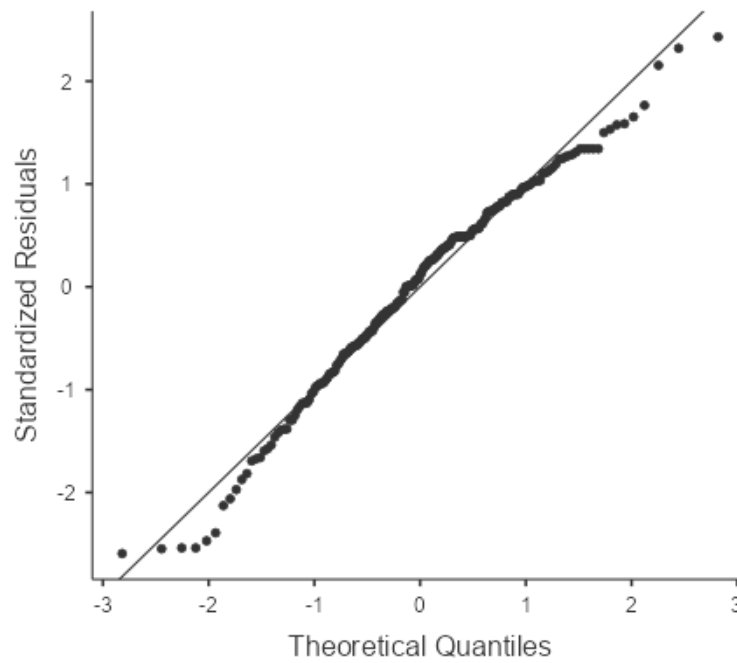
Assumptions Testing for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 involves the indirect influence of teacher morale as a mediator of the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay. Bootstrapping is used for the purpose of data analysis. Therefore, assumptions concerning the distribution of the data are not made.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed using the four research questions below. The test applied for Research Question 1 was simple regression. The test applied for Research Question 2 was a bootstrap mediation test. The test applied for Research Question 3 was Kendall's τ-b. The test applied in Research Question 4 was a bootstrap mediation test. The threshold for statistical significance for each of the hypothesis tests was $p < 0.05$.

Research Question 1

The findings from the simple regression model where democratic community alignment predicted teacher commitment included statistically significant model fit at $p < 0.05$ ($F_{(1,203)} = 35.50$). The regression model was found to have a coefficient of determination where $R^2 = 0.15$, meaning that 15% of teacher commitment could be determined by democratic community alignment. The model coefficient is evidence of a positive relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment, where $\beta = 0.39$ ($p < 0.05$). Table 4 includes the model coefficients for the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment.

Table 4

Model Coefficients of the Simple Regression Model of the Relationship Between Democratic Community Alignment and Teacher Commitment

	Estimate	SE	T	p	Std. Beta
Intercept	21.42	0.75	28.39	< .001	

Democratic Community	0.12	0.02	5.96	< .001	0.39

Research Question 2

The second research question involves the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment, as mediated by teacher morale. Table 5 includes the mediation model and path estimates. The findings were evidence that the model was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, while the direct effect between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment is statistically significant (($p < 0.05$), the indirect effect is not statistically significant ($p = 0.20$). The relationship between teacher morale and teacher commitment was also found to be not statistically significant ($p = 0.20$). These findings are evidence of a lack of mediation by teacher morale in the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment (Table 5). Figure 5 further illustrates the lack of a statistically significant indirect effect. Figure 6 includes the estimated effect score for the relationships tested.

Table 5

Mediation Estimates and Path Estimates for the Mediation Model Including Democratic Community Alignment and Teacher Commitment Mediated by Teacher Morale

Mediation Estimates

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	Z	p	% Mediation
Indirect	a × b	0.03	0.02	1.27	0.20	22.80
Direct	C	0.09	0.03	2.88	0.00	77.20
Total	c + a × b	0.11	0.02	5.26	< .001	100.00

Path Estimates

			Label	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Democratic Community	→	Morale	a	0.31	0.02	12.66	< .001
Morale	→	Commitment	b	0.08	0.07	1.25	0.21

Democratic Community	→	Commitment	c	0.09	0.03	2.88	0.00

Figure 7

A Graph of the Direct and Indirect Effects in the Mediation Model
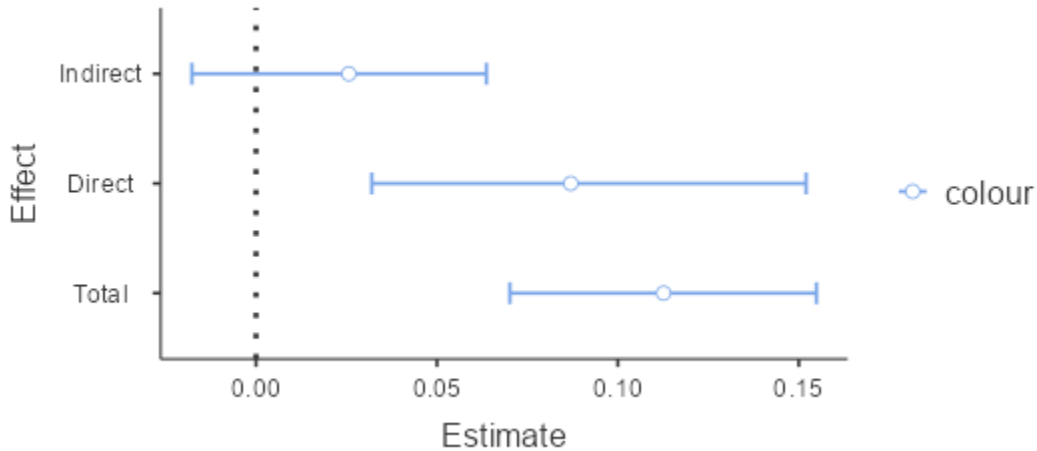
Research Question 3

Based on the lack of normality in the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay, a non-parametric alternative test was selected. The test selected was Kendall's τ-b. Kendall's τ-b was selected as a replacement test because the objective was to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay. While the results from the test cannot support ascertaining predictive capacity or the fit of a model, the results can support understanding the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between the two factors. Nonetheless, the failure of the normality test is a limitation and will be noted in Chapter 5. The results are evidence of a statistically significant relationship between democratic community alignment and intentions to stay ($p < 0.05$). The relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay is also positive at τ-b = 0.48.

Table 6

Results for Kendall's τ-b

		Democratic Community	IntentStay
Democratic Community	Kendall's τ-b	—	
	p-value	—	
IntentStay	Kendall's τ-b	0.48	—
	p-value	< .001	—

Research Question 4

The fourth research question involves the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay, as mediated by teacher morale. Table 7 includes the mediation model and path estimates. The findings were evidence that the model was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, while the direct effect is statistically significant, the indirect effect is not statistically significant ($p = 0.10$). The relationship between teacher morale and teacher intentions to stay was also found to be not statistically significant ($p = 0.10$). Figure 6 includes the estimated effect score for the relationships tested. These findings are evidence of a lack of mediation by teacher morale in the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay (Table 7). Figure 7 further illustrates the lack of a statistically significant indirect effect.

Table 7

Mediation Estimates and Path Estimates for the Mediation Model Including Democratic Community Alignment and Teacher Intention to Stay Mediated by Teacher Morale

Mediation Estimates						
Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	Z	p	% Mediation
Indirect	a × b	0.05	0.03	1.64	0.10	14.70
Direct	C	0.30	0.05	6.45	< .001	85.30

			Estimate	SE	Z	P	
Total	c + a × b	0.35	0.03	11.82	<.001	100.00	

Path Estimates

			Label	Estimate	SE	Z	P
Democratic Community	→	Morale	a	0.31	0.02	13.37	<.001
Morale	→	IntentStay	b	0.17	0.10	1.65	0.10
Democratic Community	→	IntentStay	c	0.30	0.05	6.45	<.001

Figure 8

A Graph of the Direct and Indirect Effects in the Mediation Model
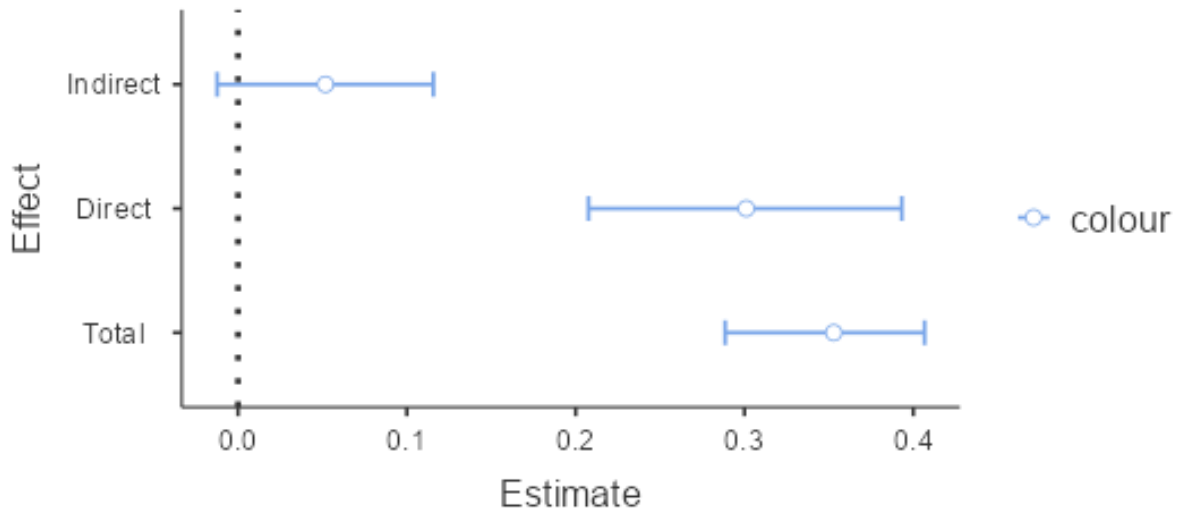
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Discussion

The chapter includes a discussion of the findings from the study and concluding remarks concerning how the results of the study should be considered influential for the current body of knowledge and support future practice and a scholarly agenda associated with the commitment of teaching staff and efforts made to encourage teachers to stay. Focus in Chapter 5 is placed on the discussion of the results, how the results fit with the current body of research, and recommendations made for future practice and research. The chapter begins with a discussion of the sample for the study and how the sample fits with the overall population for the study. The discussion supports understanding the external validity of the study, particularly the external validity of the study. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the research questions and what the findings mean for research concerning education. A discussion of the findings is also given. The discussion of the findings synthesizes the findings from this study with those from prior research. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practice and research.

Sample and Population

The relationship between the sample and population of the study is important to understand. Relating the population to the sample supports understanding the extent to which characteristics of the sample align with the population at-large. The consistency of these profile characteristics from the sample and the population supports understanding the degree to which the findings can be transferred within the specific population from which the sample was drawn and other specific populations. Table 2 includes frequencies of the profile characteristics of participants collected in the study. Specifically, these profile characteristics were teaching experience, gender, identity, race, and location. In the sample, the most frequent range for teaching experience was 6-9 years at 44.3%. All other ranges of teaching experience ranged from 9.4% for individuals teaching for 9-12 years and 12.7% for individuals teaching for 12-15 years.

At 82.0%, the majority of individuals who responded to the survey were women. White were the majority of respondents at 54.7%, followed by Black at 40.6%. Other races ranged between 0.5% for European American and 3.3% for Not Identified. There was no majority frequency for location, but the percentage of participants from rural areas was 48.6%, which is only 0.9% greater than the percentage of participants from suburban (21.0%) and urban (26.7%) locations at 47.7%.

The greater population from which the sample was drawn was teachers in Southeastern Alabama. Only some percentages and counts exist concerning the population for the study. The Southern Regional Education Board (2020) described the demographics for teachers in Alabama. They noted that while 79% of teachers were White, only 19% were Black (SREB, 2020). These frequencies for race are somewhat different than that of the sample. However, the frequencies also reflect that most teachers in the population are either White or Black, which is consistent with the sample. Data from the Alabama Department of Education (2022) includes the finding that 79% identified as female, which is consistent with the sample. The location of the sample also appears consistent with the location of the population, as the Alabama Department of Public Health (2023) reported that 43.6% of individuals in Alabama live in rural locations. These findings are evidence that the sample is relatively consistent with the population. The external validity of the study to the specific population appears as such that the findings are transferable to the immediate, specific population. The characteristics collected are also evidence that can support transferability of the findings to populations with similar characteristics.

Research Questions

The dissertation included four research questions. Two research questions involved examining the extent to which simple linear relationships existed where teacher alignment with

the democratic community predicted the commitment of teachers and the intentions of teachers to stay in their positions. Two research questions introduced teacher morale as a mediator of the relationships where teacher alignment with democratic community predicted the commitment of teachers and the intentions of teachers to stay in their positions. The results were mixed. The direct relationships were significant. However, the indirect relationships were not. An interpretation of the findings from Chapter 4 is included in this section.

Research Question 1

The findings from the simple regression model reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment. The model fit is significant at $p < 0.05$, providing evidence that the relationship between these variables is not due to chance. The coefficient of determination ($R2 = 0.15$) indicates that approximately 14.90% of the variance in teacher commitment can be attributed to democratic community alignment. This suggests that when teachers perceive a strong sense of democratic community within their school environment, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of commitment to their profession and the school community. The significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.39$) indicates that as democratic community alignment increases, there is a corresponding increase in teacher commitment. This finding holds important implications for educational institutions as it highlights the importance of cultivating a participatory and inclusive school culture to foster teacher commitment. By promoting democratic values, encouraging shared decision-making, and fostering a sense of community and belonging among teachers, schools can enhance teacher commitment, leading to positive outcomes for both educators and students.

Research Question 2

The second research question delves into the potential mediating role of teacher morale in

the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment. The mediation model shows statistical significance, indicating that teacher morale does play a role in influencing teacher commitment. The significance of the model suggests that teacher morale contributes to shaping teachers' commitment levels. However, the non-significant indirect effect indicates that teacher morale does not fully mediate the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment. In other words, while teacher morale may impact teacher commitment, it does not entirely account for the influence of democratic community alignment on teachers' dedication to their profession and the school community. The lack of statistical significance between teacher morale and teacher commitment suggests that other factors beyond overall job satisfaction are at play in determining teachers' commitment levels. This finding underscores the need for educational institutions to go beyond focusing solely on improving teacher morale and recognize the significance of cultivating a democratic and inclusive school culture. Schools should work towards creating an environment that encourages participation, collaboration, and open communication among all stakeholders, as these elements are crucial in fostering teacher commitment and dedication to the school's mission and vision.

Research Question 3

The third research question addresses the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay, assessed through Kendall's τ-b, a non-parametric alternative test. The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay. This implies that when teachers perceive a strong sense of democratic community alignment within their school, they are more inclined to express intentions to continue working at that institution. The significance of the

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relationship points to the potential importance of a democratic and inclusive school culture in influencing teacher retention. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitation of the non-normality of the relationship, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Despite this limitation, the significant positive association highlights the potential impact of creating a supportive and participatory school environment on teacher retention. Schools can foster teacher intentions to stay by encouraging shared decision-making processes, involving teachers in school governance, and promoting a sense of belonging and shared values within the school community.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question investigates whether teacher morale acts as a mediator in the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay. The mediation model shows statistical significance, indicating that teacher morale does have an impact on teacher intentions to stay. The significance of the model suggests that teacher morale is a factor that influences teachers' decisions regarding their intentions to remain in the profession. However, the non-significant indirect effect implies that teacher morale does not fully mediate the relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay. In other words, while teacher morale may influence teachers' intentions to continue teaching, there are other factors related to democratic community alignment that also play a role in shaping their decisions. The non-significant relationship between teacher morale and teacher intentions to stay further emphasizes that enhancing teacher morale alone may not be enough to significantly impact teacher retention. Therefore, educational institutions should focus not only on improving teacher morale but also on fostering a sense of democratic community within the school. By providing opportunities for teachers to engage in decision-making, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect, and promoting a sense of ownership and belonging, schools

can positively influence teacher intentions to stay and ultimately enhance teacher retention rates.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from the statistical analysis performed in this quantitative dissertation can be understood as fitting into the greater body of scholarly knowledge concerning the problems of teacher commitment and their intentions to stay as influenced by democratic community alignment. The association between democratic community alignment and the variables of teacher intentions to stay and the commitment of teachers were found to be positive and statistically significant. However, teacher morale was found to be not significant in holding an indirect effect on the association between democratic community alignment and the variables of teacher intentions to stay and the commitment of teachers. These findings are discussed further in this section.

The findings from prior research emphasize the importance of democratic communities in improving schools, which is consistent with the significant positive relationship found between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment. As stated by Sales et al. (2017), democratic leadership empowers teachers and work teams by involving them in policy planning and decision-making processes. This involvement and sense of ownership in school governance, as observed in democratic community alignment, can positively influence teacher commitment, fostering a greater dedication to their profession and the school community. The notion of democratic leadership being associated with education reform and school improvement also aligns with the findings that highlight the significant relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher intentions to stay. Ainscow (2005) and Ainscow & Sandill (2010) note that widely shared leadership in the form of democratic practices can lead to enhanced access and achievement for all students. This connection implies that when teachers

experience a democratic community alignment within the school, they are more likely to express intentions to remain in the profession, potentially contributing to improved teacher retention rates.

Moreover, the findings from prior research support that a democratic approach within schools can yield better results in terms of teacher retention, morale, and student achievement (Day et al., 2000; Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005; Wheatley, 1992). These outcomes are consistent with the findings that highlight the statistically significant positive relationship between democratic community alignment and teacher commitment. The increased teacher commitment observed in a democratic community may positively impact teacher morale, leading to improved job satisfaction and overall well-being, but according to the findings, not teacher commitment or teacher intentions to stay. The idea that educational leaders play a crucial role in school success, student achievement, and school climate further reinforces the importance of fostering a democratic community alignment within educational institutions (Glickman, 2003). When leadership is distributed among teachers and various stakeholders, as supported by the research on democratic leadership, it can create a more inclusive and collaborative school environment. This type of environment is likely to align with the findings related to teacher commitment and teacher intentions to stay, as teachers feel valued and involved in shaping the direction of the school, which in turn enhances their commitment to the profession and their intentions to remain in the school community.

Prior research provides valuable insights into the significance of democratic communities and the potential benefits for educational institutions, as noted in the literature review for this study. Lahtero et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study that examined the views of principals and faculty members on democratic leadership at both elementary and secondary levels. Their

findings highlighted that democratic leadership involves delegating tasks and fostering

interactions among the leadership team, both in official and unofficial structures of the school.

This aligns with the research findings on the positive relationship between democratic

community alignment and teacher commitment, teacher intentions to stay, and potentially

teacher morale and student achievement. Furthermore, Mullick et al. (2013) conducted a

qualitative study that emphasized the importance of distributed leadership and democratic

decision-making within schools. Their research suggested that leadership roles should be

distributed throughout the school and not limited to a single person. They also found that

teachers who actively engage in leadership functions, even if not in formal leadership positions,

can influence instructional practices positively. This further supports the idea that democratic

community alignment, which encourages shared responsibilities among faculty and staff, can

lead to better instructional practices and potentially impact student achievement.

Recommendations

Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future practice and future research.

Recommendations for future practice are made concerning how the results from this study

should influence practices of individuals in leadership positions in education. Particularly, the

recommendations for future practice should influence how administrators and executives in the

K-12 system approach problems concerning teacher attrition and their commitment to their work.

Recommendations for future research are made as well. The recommendations for future

research are made concerning how future studies should approach this problem as not all

findings in the study were significant. The establishment of a research agenda concerning teacher

intentions to stay in their positions and their commitment to their jobs is made in this section.

Based on these recommendations, there is more work to be done concerning the implementation

of policies and practices of school administration and executives, as well as for researchers in the field of education.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Building upon the findings related to democratic community alignment, teacher commitment, and teacher morale, practical recommendations for educational institutions emerged. One critical area of focus is to promote democratic community building within schools. Encouraging shared decision-making processes, participatory leadership, and open communication channels among administrators, teachers, and stakeholders can foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the school community. Providing professional development opportunities on community building can equip educators with the necessary skills to create an inclusive and supportive teaching environment. By investing in these initiatives, schools can establish a strong sense of community that positively impacts teacher commitment and intentions to remain in the profession.

Another key practice recommendation is to implement initiatives that support teacher morale. As indicated by the research findings, teacher morale does not hold a significant role in mediating the relationship between democratic community alignment and teaching commitment. However, democratic community alignment is a statistically significant predictor of teacher morale. Recognizing and celebrating teachers' achievements, creating a positive work environment, and offering resources for managing stress and burnout are essential components of these initiatives. Additionally, establishing regular feedback mechanisms for teachers to express their opinions and concerns can foster a culture of open communication and mutual respect. Furthermore, providing career development opportunities, such as leadership roles and specialized certifications, can incentivize teachers to stay committed to their profession and

continuously grow within the educational field. By focusing on these practices, educational institutions can nurture a supportive and empowering environment for teachers, ultimately enhancing their commitment and retention rates.

Recommendations for Future Research

To advance the current understanding of the relationships between democratic community alignment, teacher commitment, and teacher intentions to stay, future research should explore these connections through longitudinal studies and qualitative investigations. Longitudinal studies would allow researchers to track changes in democratic community alignment, teaching commitment, and teacher intentions to stay over an extended period, providing valuable insights into the causality and temporal dynamics of these relationships. Additionally, qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could complement the quantitative findings by delving into the nuanced experiences and perspectives of teachers. Understanding the underlying factors that influence democratic community alignment, teaching commitment, and teacher morale can provide a more comprehensive picture of the mechanisms driving these associations.

Furthermore, it is essential to investigate potential moderating variables to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities at play. Factors like school climate, teacher experience, and leadership styles may interact with democratic community alignment and its impact on teaching commitment and teacher intentions to stay differently in various contexts. Examining these moderating variables can offer valuable insights into the conditions under which democratic community alignment has a more significant impact on teacher outcomes. Comparative analyses between different educational systems or countries can further enrich the understanding of how cultural and societal contexts influence the relationship between democratic community

alignment, teaching commitment, and teacher intentions to stay. By exploring these cross-cultural differences, researchers can identify effective strategies for fostering democratic community alignment and supporting teacher commitment across diverse settings.

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Appendix A

AUBURN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM (HRPP)

EXEMPT REVIEW APPLICATION

For assistance, contact: The Office of Research Compliance (ORC)
Phone: 334-844-5966   E-Mail: IRBAdmin@auburn.edu   Web Address: http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs
Submit completed form and supporting materials as one PDF through the IRB Submission Page
Hand written forms are not accepted. Where links are found hold down the control button (Ctrl) then click the link..

1. Project Identification   Today's Date: February 27, 2023

Anticipated start date of the project: March 13, 2023   Anticipated duration of project: 1 Year
a. Project Title: Democratic Community in K-12 Schools

b. Principal Investigator (PI): Angela Charles   Degree(s): Ph.D. Candidate
Rank/Title: Graduate Student   Department/School: Educational Foundations,
Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: Investigator
Preferred Phone Number: 205-478-6558   AU Email: acc0087@auburn.edu

Faculty Advisor Principal Investigator (if applicable): Dr. Lisa A. Kensler
Rank/Title: Professor   Department/School: Education/EFLT
Role/responsibilities in this project: Dissertation Chair
Preferred Phone Number: 334-8443020   AU Email: lak0008@auburn.edu

Department Head: Dr. Jeff Reese   Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and
Technology
Preferred Phone Number: (334) 844-7656   AU Email: rjr0028@auburn.edu
Role/responsibilities in this project: Dept Head

c. Project Key Personnel – Identify all key personnel who will be involved with the conduct of the research and
describe their role in the project. Role may include design, recruitment, consent process, data collection, data
analysis, and reporting. (To determine key personnel, see decision tree). *Exempt determinations are made by
individual institutions; reliance on other institutions for exempt determination is not feasible. Non-AU personnel
conducting exempt research activities must obtain approval from the IRB at their home institution.*

Key personnel are required to maintain human subjects training through CITI. Only for EXEMPT level research is
documentation of completed CITI training NO LONGER REQUIRED to be included in the submission packet.
NOTE however, **the IRB will perform random audits of CITI training records to confirm** reported training
courses and expiration dates. Course title and expiration dates are shown on training certificates.

Name: Angela Charles   Degree(s): Ph.D.
Rank/Title: Graduate Student   Department/School: Educational Foundations,
Leadership, and Technology
Role/responsibilities in this project: Investigator, design, recruitment, consent, data collection, data analysis,
reporting
- AU affiliated? ☒ Yes ☐ No   If no, name of home institution: Click or tap here to enter text
- Plan for IRB approval for non–AU affiliated personnel? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have
  influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? ☐ Yes   ☒ No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Completed required CITI training? ☒ Yes   ☐ No If NO, complete the appropriate CITI basic course and update
  the revised Exempt Application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Human Sciences Basic Course   5/31/2023

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Choose a course   Expiration Date

Name: Lisa Kensler   **Degree(s): EdD**

Rank/Title: Professor   Department/School: Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

Role/responsibilities in this project: Advisor, support design, recruitment plan, analysis, and reporting

- AU affiliated? ☒ Yes ☐ No   If no, name of home institution: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Plan for IRB approval for non–AU affiliated personnel? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: Click or tap here to enter text.
- Completed required CITI training? ☒ Yes ☐ No If NO, complete the appropriate CITI basic course and update the revised EXEMPT application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Human Sciences Basic Course   10/26/2023

                                               Choose a course   Expiration Date

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.   **Degree(s):** Click or tap here to enter text.

Rank/Title: Choose Rank/Title   Department/School: Choose Department/School

Role/responsibilities in this project: Click or tap here to enter text.

- AU affiliated? ☐ Yes ☐ No   If no, name of home institution: Click or tap here to enter text
- Plan for IRB approval for non–AU affiliated personnel? Click or tap here to enter text.
- Do you have any known competing financial interests, personal relationships, or other interests that could have influence or appear to have influence on the work conducted in this project? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, briefly describe the potential or real conflict of interest: Click or tap here to enter text
- Completed required CITI training? ☐ Yes ☐ No If NO, complete the appropriate CITI basic course and update the revised EXEMPT application form.
- If YES, choose course(s) the researcher has completed: Choose a course   Expiration Date
                                                 Choose a course   Expiration Date

d. **Funding Source** – Is this project funded by the Investigator(s)? Yes ☒ No ☐

Is this project funded by AU?   Yes ☐ No ☒ If YES, identify source Click or tap here to enter text.

Is this project funded by an external sponsor? Yes ☐ No ☒   If YES, provide name of sponsor, type of sponsor (governmental, non-profit, corporate, other), and an identification number for the award.

Name: Click or tap here to enter text   Type: Click or tap here to enter text. Grant #: Click or tap here to enter text.

e. List other AU IRB-approved research projects and/or IRB approvals from other institutions that are associated with this project. Describe the association between this project and the listed project(s):

N/A

2. Project Summary

a. Does the study _TARGET_ any special populations? Answer YES or NO to all.

Minors (under 18 years of age; if minor participants, at least 2 adults must be present during all research procedures that include the minors)	Yes ☐ No ☒
Auburn University Students	Yes ☐ No ☒
Pregnant women, fetuses, or any products of conception	Yes ☐ No ☒
Prisoners or wards (unless incidental, not allowed for Exempt research)	Yes ☐ No ☒

Temporarily or permanently impaired   Yes ☐ No ☒

b. **Does the research pose more than minimal risk to participants?**   Yes ☐ No ☒

If YES, to question 2.b, then the research activity is NOT eligible for EXEMPT review. Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or test. 42 CFR 46.102(i)

c. **Does the study involve any of the following?** *If YES to any of the questions in item 2.c, then the research activity is NOT eligible for EXEMPT review.*

Procedures subject to FDA regulations (drugs, devices, etc.)   Yes ☐ No ☒

Use of school records of identifiable students or information from
instructors about specific students.   Yes ☐ No ☒

Protected health or medical information when there is a direct or indirect
link which could identify the participant.   Yes ☐ No ☒

Collection of sensitive aspects of the participant's own behavior,
such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior or alcohol use.   Yes ☐ No ☒

d. **Does the study include deception? Requires limited review by the IRB***   Yes ☐ No ☒

3. **MARK the category or categories below that describe the proposed research. Note the IRB Reviewer will make the final determination of the eligible category or categories.**

   ☐ 1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices. The research is not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn or assessment of educators providing instruction. 104(d)(1)

   ☒ 2. Research only includes interactions involving educational tests, surveys, interviews, public observation if at least ONE of the following criteria. (The research includes data collection only; may include visual or auditory recording; may NOT include intervention and only includes interactions). **Mark the applicable sub-category below (i, ii, or iii). 104(d)(2)**

   ☒ (i) Recorded information cannot readily identify the participant (directly or indirectly/ linked);
   OR
   - surveys and interviews: no children;
   - educational tests or observation of public behavior: can only include children when investigators do not participate in activities being observed.

   ☐ (ii) Any disclosures of responses outside would not reasonably place participant at risk; OR

   ☐ (iii) Information is recorded with identifiers or code linked to identifiers and IRB conducts limited review; no children. **Requires limited review by the IRB.***

   ☐ 3. Research involving Benign Behavioral Interventions (BBI)** through verbal, written responses including data entry or audiovisual recording from adult subjects who prospectively agree and ONE of the following criteria is met. (This research does not include children and does not include medical interventions. Research cannot have deception unless the participant prospectively agrees that they will be unaware of or misled regarding the nature and purpose of the research) **Mark the applicable sub-category below (A, B, or C).** 104(d)(3)(i)

   ☐ (A) Recorded information cannot readily identify the subject (directly or indirectly/ linked); OR

☐ (B) Any disclosure of responses outside of the research would not reasonably place subject at risk;
OR

☐ (C) Information is recorded with identifies and cannot have deception unless participants prospectively agree. **Requires limited review by the IRB.***

☐ 4. Secondary research for which consent is not required: use of identifiable information or identifiable bio-specimen that have been or will be collected for some other 'primary' or 'initial' activity, if one of the following criteria is met. Allows retrospective and prospective secondary use. **Mark the applicable sub-category below (i, ii, iii, or iv).** 104 (d)(4)

☐ (i) Bio-specimens or information are publicly available;

☐ (ii) Information recorded so subject cannot readily be identified, directly or indirectly/linked investigator does not contact subjects and will not re-identify the subjects; **OR**

☐ (iii) Collection and analysis involving investigators use of identifiable health information when us is regulated by HIPAA "health care operations" or "research" or "public health activities and purposes" (does not include bio-specimens (only PHI and requires federal guidance on how to apply); **OR**

☐ (iv) Research information collected by or on behalf of federal government using government generated or collected information obtained for non-research activities.

☐ 5. Research and demonstration projects which are supported by a federal agency/department AND designed to study and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i)public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or service under those programs. (must be posted on a federal web site). 104.5(d)(5) (must be posted on a federal web site)

☐ 6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives and consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The research does not involve prisoners as participants. 104(d)(6)

*Limited IRB review – the IRB Chair or designated IRB reviewer reviews the protocol to ensure adequate provisions are in place to protect privacy and confidentiality.

**Category 3 – Benign Behavioral Interventions (BBI) must be brief in duration, painless/harmless, not physically invasive, not likely to have a significant adverse lasting impact on participants, and it is unlikely participants will find the interventions offensive or embarrassing.

*** Exemption categories 7 and 8 require broad consent. The AU IRB has determined the regulatory requirements for legally effective broad consent are not feasible within the current institutional infrastructure. EXEMPT categories 7 and 8 will not be implemented at this time.

4. Describe the proposed research including who does what, when, where, how, and for how long, etc.
   a. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between democratic community, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay in public schools in Alabama using anonymous surveys of in-service teachers.

b. Participant population, including the number of participants and the rationale for determining number of participants to recruit and enroll. Note if the study enrolls minor participants, describe the process to ensure more than 1 adult is present during all research procedures which include the minor.

The participant population will consist of teachers in Alabama. Since this is survey research, I seek at least 100 participants and will recruit them using social media. This form of recruiting does not allow for knowing an exact reach of recruits.

c. Recruitment process. Address whether recruitment includes communications/interactions between study staff and potential participants either in person or online. *Submit a copy of all recruitment materials.*

The investigator will create social media posts to recruit teachers in Alabama to take the survey. The posts will include the link to the survey.

d. Consent process including how information is presented to participants, etc.

The consent information will be the first page of the survey and participation in the survey will indicate consent.

e. Research procedures and methodology

Participants will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey.

f. Anticipated time per study exercise/activity and total time if participants complete all study activities.

It should take participants no more than 20 minutes to complete the survey.

g. Location of the research activities.

Survey completion will take place online.

h. Costs to and compensation for participants? If participants will be compensated describe the amount, type, and process to distribute.

$0

i. Non-AU locations, site, institutions. *Submit a copy of agreements/IRB approvals.*

N/A

j. Describe how results of this study will be used (presentation? publication? thesis? dissertation?)

The results of this study will be used to determine statistical relationships among democratic communities, teacher morale, teacher commitment, and teachers' intent to stay working at their school. This study is required for completing my dissertation and may also be shared in professional meetings and discipline specific publications.

k. Additional relevant information.

N/A

5. Waivers

Check applicable waivers and describe how the project meets the criteria for the waiver.

☐ Waiver of Consent (Including existing de-identified data)

☒ Waiver of Documentation of Consent (Use of Information Letter, rather than consent form requiring signatures)

☐ Waiver of Parental Permission (in Alabama, 18 years-olds may be considered adults for research purposes)
https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/orc/irb/IRB 1 Exempt and Expedited/11-113 MR 1104 Hinton Renewal 2021-1.pdf

a. Provide the rationale for the waiver request.
The survey is an anonymous survey. Participating in the survey indicates consent and there will be no way to identify participants. Therefore, signatures indicating consent are not necessary.

6. Describe the process to select participants/data/specimens. If applicable, include gender, race, and ethnicity of the participant population.
Participants will be recruited via social media. Participants will qualify to complete the survey with the first question (Are you an educator in the state of Alabama)? If they do not meet this criteria with the correct response, then survey will automatically end.

7. Risks and Benefits
7a. Risks - Describe why none of the research procedures would cause a participant either physical or psychological discomfort or be perceived as discomfort above and beyond what the person would experience in daily life (minimal risk).
There should not be any risks beyond giving up some time. The survey will collect anonymous data. The questions are not focused on sensitive topics.

7b. Benefits – Describe whether participants will benefit directly from participating in the study. If yes, describe the benefit. And, describe generalizable benefits resulting from the study.
The only benefit to participants is the opportunity for reflection on their school community that the survey questions may prompt.

8. Describe the provisions to maintain confidentiality of data, including collection, transmission, and storage. Identify platforms used to collect and store study data. *For EXEMPT research, the AU IRB recommends AU BOX or using an AU issued and encrypted device. If a data collection form will be used, submit a copy.*
The survey is anonymous and that will be explained to all participants. They will also know that the survey is for research purpose only. Survey responses will be collected via Qualtrics and then downloaded and stored within an AU BOX file.

a. If applicable, submit a copy of the data management plan or data use agreement.
N/A

9. Describe the provisions included in the research to protect the privacy interests of participants (e.g., others will not overhear conversations with potential participants, individuals will not be publicly identified or embarrassed).
Data collection is anonymous.

10. Does this research include purchase(s) that involve technology hardware, software or online services?
☐ YES   ☒ NO

If YES:
A. Provide the name of the product   Click or tap here to enter text.
and the manufacturer of the product   Click or tap here to enter text.
B. Briefly describe use of the product in the proposed human subject's research.

C. To ensure compliance with AU's Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Policy, contact AU IT Vendor Vetting team at vetting@auburn.edu to learn the vendor registration process (prior to completing the purchase).
D. Include a copy of the documentation of the approval from AU Vetting with the revised submission.

11. Additional Information and/or attachments.
In the space below, provide any additional information you believe may help the IRB review of the proposed research. If attachments are included, list the attachments below. Attachments may include recruitment materials, consent documents, site permissions, IRB approvals from other institutions, data use agreements, data collection form, CITI training documentation, etc.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Required Signatures (*If a student PI is identified in item 1.a, the EXEMPT application must be re-signed and updated at every revision by the student PI and faculty advisor. The signature of the department head is required only on the initial submission of the EXEMPT application, regardless of PI. Staff and faculty PI submissions require the PI signature on all version, the department head signature on the original submission*)

Signature of Principal Investigator: _Angela Charles_   Date: 02/27/2023

Signature of Faculty Advisor (If applicable): _____   Date: 2-28-2023

Signature of Dept. Head: _Jeff Reese_   Date: 2/28/23

Version Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

Default Question Block

Are you a public, K-12 teacher at a school in Alabama?

○ Yes

○ No

There is good team spirit in this school.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

The morale in this school is high.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Teachers go about their work with enthusiasm.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

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○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Teachers take pride in this school.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

There is a lot of energy in this school.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I am eager to find better ways of doing my job through attentive reflection.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I seek high-quality job performance.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I make additional effort to acquire information and skills for my job.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I try to make proper changes congruent with my professional beliefs even when I am not accustomed to the situation.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neural

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

When I participate in decision making, I place a higher priority on my job than on my personal interests.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I take part in school affairs without fringe benefits, which I can deal well with.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

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○ Strongly Disagree

I have no intention of quitting work from the school where I work.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I never thought to look for work in another school.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I will work in this school for a long time.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I will not look for new job openings in the near future.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

I will still work at this school despite being offered a higher salary at another school.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are aligned with my school's purpose, vision, and values.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

Systems and processes are in place that provide ethical checks and balances for my school and protect it from fraud.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place that bring a balanced approach to my school's accountability, not just a singular focus on test scores.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

Systems and processes are in place that allow individuals a choice in key decisions that impact their work and job performance.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place to appropriately reward and recognize individual efforts and results.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place to appropriately reward and recognize collective efforts and results.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place so that my school can function with a minimal amount of bureaucracy and managerial hierarchy.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place to keep me informed about my school's overall performance.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place that allow everyone to take appropriate amount of time to dialogue and listen to ideas and suggestions.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place allowing for individuals to excel regardless of rank, gender, race, national origin, religion, or age.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

Systems and processes are in place that encourage valuable performance feedback.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

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○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

How many years have you been teaching?

○ 0-3 years

○ 3-6 years

○ 6-9 years

○ 9-12 years

○ 12-15 years

○ 15+ years

Which most closely describes your gender?

○ Man

○ Woman

○ My gender is

○ Prefer not to share

Which most closely describes your race?

○ White or Caucasian

○ African American or Black

○ Asian American or Pacific Islander

○ Hispanic or Latino

○ European American

○ Self report

How is your school classified?

○ Urban

○ Suburban

○ Rural

○ Other

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What grade do you teach?

Powered by Qualtrics

CITI PROGRAM

This is to certify that:

Angela Charles

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Responsible Conduct of Research for Social and Behavioral
(Curriculum Group)

Social, Behavioral and Education Sciences RCR
(Course Learner Group)

1 - RCR
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

Completion Date 01-Jun-2018
Expiration Date 31-May-2023
Record ID 27254152

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

CITI

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w927987ee-9170-4437-98a2-3c631b2cca35-27254152

CITI PROGRAM

This is to certify that:

Angela Charles

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

IRB Additional Modules
(Curriculum Group)

Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE
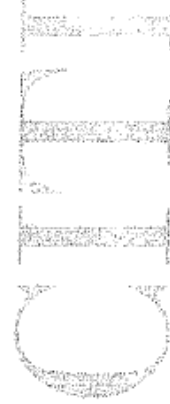(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

Completion Date 22-Jan-2023
Expiration Date 22-Jan-2026
Record ID 41206136

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

CITI
Collaborative Institute of Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we5c567d6-4666-44d9-81e6-9b89d3a671ba-41206136
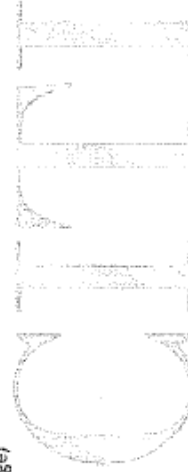
CITI PROGRAM

This is to certify that:

Lisa Kensler

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel - Basic/Refresher

IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel (Curriculum Group)

1 - Basic Course (Course Learner Group)

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

Completion Date   26-Oct-2020
Expiration Date   26-Oct-2023
Record ID   37826561

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w9b1ef80a-650f-432f-9e79-1031d8d195e0-37826561

CITI PROGRAM

This is to certify that:

Lisa Kensler
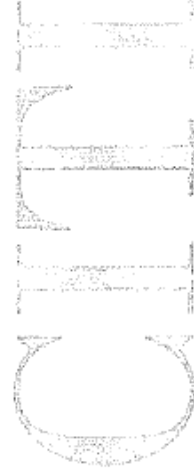
Has completed the following CITI Program course:

IRB Additional Modules
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (Curriculum Group)
1 - Basic Course (Course Learner Group)
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

Completion Date   26-Oct-2020
Expiration Date   26-Oct-2023
Record ID   37826558

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

CITI

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wb46a18d5-b1b2-4eb5-afa0-9d094eb95de5-37826558