PRIORITY SCHOOL PRIORITIES: MOTIVATION AND MORALE - A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

The journey that led to the completion and publishing of this dissertation was a long, arduous, and tiresome one. This was not only the case for me, but it certainly was for so many of my beloved family members. I dedicate this work to my family, as I know I would have never been able to endure this journey without their constant love and encouragement. First, I dedicate this work to my wife and love of my life, Julie Sedick. She sacrificed so much while I pursued my educational goals, and always did so with love, encouragement, and unfathomable patience. She is the reason why I was able to persevere and reach the pinnacle of my educational journey. She is everything to me. Second, I dedicate this dissertation to my two sons, Riley and Casey Sedick. I deeply love them both. They too, have shown tremendous patience throughout this process. Since birth, they both waited for their dad to be done with *his* schooling. Now, nearly nine years later, the excitement I feel moving on from this work, and being able to give more of my time, attention, and love to them, is immeasurable. Also, I dedicate this work to my parents, Jim and Mardi Sedick. There is no way I could ever pay them back for all that they have done for me. I have always viewed my father as the blueprint for what a man should strive to be. The lessons he has so gracefully taught me over the course of my life are invaluable. I could not have asked for a better father, role model and friend. For as long as I can remember, my mother has been my biggest cheerleader. She nurtured me through my childhood, coached me through my decision to pursue a career in education, and was the never-ending "push" I needed to accomplish my educational and professional goals. I owe them both an immense debt of gratitude for holding high expectations of me, for not allowing me to fall short of these expectations, and for supporting our family in so many ways while I worked to reach them. I am also grateful to them. Parents like mine are indeed a gift, and I thank God every day for blessing

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Abstract

Post-No Child Left Behind educational accountability policies and the sanctions embedded within them require those who work in low-performing Priority Schools to change their practice in order to improve rapidly the performance of their schools. These educators are expected to accelerate student achievement rates faster than those who work in schools that have not been identified with such a label. An obvious behaviorist element exists in how teachers in these schools are expected to overhaul pre-existing approaches teaching and learning. What is less pronounced though, is how the behaviors of teachers' motivation and morale (two variables associated with increased productivity and organizational success) are impacted when the sanctions of current educational accountability policy are imposed onto their schools? A qualitative descriptive study was conducted to investigate this dynamic. This study included teacher participants from two Michigan Priority Schools. In addition, these schools have received an additional and previously unprecedented sanction of supervision by the State (of Michigan) School Reform Office – the assignment of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Data supporting the findings of this study were to be collected through several teacher interviews. The teacher interview data provided findings to each of the study's five research questions. Open coding was used to unearth these findings, which pointed to the impact of such a policy on participating teachers' motivation and morale in these settings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For decades, United States public school systems have reacted in various ways to an intensifying public and political outcry for accountability to be placed onto those who hold the responsibility of educating students. The outcry is a response to various reports that have pointed out the declining performance of America's public education system (Brodbelt, 1972; Desilver, 2017; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Serino, 2017). Such reports have suggested that the country has taken too long to transition from its decades-old design to prepare children for success in an industrialized America, to one that adequately prepares students for college and careers in the 21st century (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This delayed transition had contributed to a trend of underperformance in academic achievement produced by American students on international assessments, when compared to their global counterparts. These assessments include the most recently administered Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), when compared to their international counterparts (Desilver, 2017; Serino, 2017). Such trends caught the eye of the public masses and supported the rallying cry for the presence of educational accountability in U.S. schools.

The influence of accountability in educational policies has since led to a nationwide initiative to improve the performance of schools, primarily those that are deemed as "low performing" or "priority" schools. In order for such improvements to be made, many of these schools have been required to implement drastic reform efforts by educational accountability policies such as Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c. Under these systems, schools that are successful in complying with the requirements and improving their performance are often met with a reward, or the elimination of their identification as a low performing or Priority School at a minimum. However, schools that fail to comply with such requirements, or whose reform

efforts do not result in the type of improved performance that is expected by such policies are often the recipients of sanctions. These sanctions ranged from requirements to create and implement a new school improvement plan, to mandated school closure. They served as the consequence of the accountability system in today's educational environment. Such accountability has been thought to "force the public school to act on its failure, and build on its present successes" (Brodbelt, 1971, p. 63), yet many schools still struggle to respond in ways that produce the desired result.

Some Priority Schools do not yield enough improvement in their performance, even when the direst of consequences threaten their very existence. Meanwhile, other Priority Schools improve performance enough to eliminate this label. Such a phenomenon leads to a question of how accountability policies and their sanctions impact those who educate children in America's schools. The true interest of this work can be found when such questions are directed at the motivation and morale of the teachers within these schools. This is important to the foundation of this work since employee motivation (Cooper, 1977; Ofoegbu, 2004; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007; Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Smith, 2009) and morale (Abbot, 2003; Covington, 2010; Mackenzie, 2007; Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2009; Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006) are essential components to success in organizations, including schools. These connections have inspired this study, which examined the impact of current educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale.

The goal of this chapter is to uncover the design and components of a study on the impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale. This will be done by providing insights regarding the study's problem statement, research questions, purpose, significance, methodological framework summary, delimitations, and key definitions. This

information will provide the foundational knowledge and understanding supporting the goals and objectives of this study.

Problem Statement

It seems reasonable that the concept of accountability is embedded within the educational landscape. What appears to be missing from educational accountability policies is the presence of an awareness or acknowledgement of the motivation or morale of teachers in low performing or Priority Schools where sanctions from such policies have been imposed.

Educational accountability policies and the sanctions embedded within them are designed as a means to initiate school reform initiatives that improve the performance of schools (Center for American Progress and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014; Trust, 2016). If successful, such a process would serve as a means of improving the overall academic performance of the American educational system. If this was the case, the nation's students would likely close the existing gap between their academic performance versus their international counterparts. This type of improvement would result in the dissolution of concerns raised about the American education system in the latter portion of the 20th century.

A number of policy-embedded sanctions may be imposed when schools are identified as low performing or Priority Schools (Michigan Department of Education, 2015). These sanctions the consequences imposed on them can range in intensity. These consequences can ultimately progress to the forced closure of such schools, as is the case within the language of Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c. While working in a Priority School, staff members might consider continuing with current practices and hope for the best. Another option is that these educators drastically change the way that teaching and learning takes place within the school as a means of striving for a better outcome. Educational accountability policies, such as Michigan Compiled

Law 380.1280c, require schools to formulate a plan that is suggestive of the latter option. The expectation is that the staff members of these schools research and implement high-yield, research-based instructional strategies to replace previous institutionalized practices that led to low schoolwide performance in the first place. It was the intent of this study to examine the impact of current educational accountability policy on motivation and morale of those who are expected to make these changes, that is, teachers who have worked in Priority Schools.

Earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out that employee motivation and morale are key components to the success of a school (Ofoegbu, 2004; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007; Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Smith, 2009) and morale (Abbot, 2003; Covington, 2010; Mackenzie, 2007; Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2009; Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). When schools are identified as Priority Schools, the teachers of these schools might interpret this message in such a way that suggests that they aren't working hard enough, or that they've been doing the work the wrong way all along, and require massive changes to the way they engage in the work. Such messaging can influence a teacher's motivation and morale. This may only be the first education accountability policy-related impact. Taking a more long-term perspective, the problem is that the sanctions imposed onto schools that are identified as low-performing or Priority Schools according to the current educational accountability policy put additional pressure onto teachers who work within such schools. This added pressure is a requirement that Priority School teachers make more substantial improvements in students' academic achievement rates at a faster rate than those schools that are not considered to be Priority Schools. How this pressure, supported by the sanctions of educational accountability policy, impacted the motivation and morale of the teachers who have worked in these schools

was the focal point of this work, and was investigated through the search for answers to several research questions.

Research Questions

In order to engage in a study on how educational accountability policy affects these teachers' motivation and morale, the intent of this study was to ask and seek answers to research questions that include the various aspects of teachers' motivation, along with their morale. The questions were influenced by the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, which are thoroughly described in the second chapter of this work. The five research questions driving this study include:

1. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' motivation in low-performing Priority Schools?***
2. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' expectancy related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School?***
3. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' valence related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School?***
4. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' instrumentality related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School?***
5. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' morale in low-performing schools?***

Purpose of the Study

The primary inspiration for this study was derived from the researcher's experiences working as a district and school-level administrator in Priority Schools in Michigan. These experiences have led to many interactions between the researcher and those who teach in schools with this status. Several observations of teachers' motivation and morale have been made while working through the processes involved with being identified as a Priority School, as well as researching, developing, implementing, and evaluating a mandatory school reform/redesign plan.

Such observations have been made under these circumstances, though also in the context of a school working its way out of Priority School status. These experiences have prompted an interest for this topic, and a desire to conduct a formal study on the impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale.

One goal of this study was to establish how a current educational accountability policy impacts teachers' motivation. If such an impact exists, the researcher aspired to achieve a secondary objective of definitively pointing out the type of impact (positive or negative) this type of policy had on teachers' motivation.

Another goal of the study was to determine how current educational accountability policy impacts teachers' morale. Like the first goal, if teachers' morale was indeed impacted by such policy, the researcher hoped to understand the type of impact (positive or negative) that is generated through the interplay of these variables.

Finally, if either of the goals were accomplished through this study, it was the aspiration of the researcher that the findings of this work may be used to inform and influence future educational accountability policy at the state, and perhaps even the federal level. The outcomes of future educational accountability policies may improve if lawmakers acknowledge and consider of any significant findings produced by this study when the policy is being developed. Taking notice of such findings would be important in the process of writing this type of policy, since employee motivation (Ofoegbu, 2004; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007; Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Smith, 2009) and morale (Abbot, 2003; Covington, 2010; Mackenzie, 2007; Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2009; Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006) have been identified as important aspects that support a school's success.

Significance of the Study

It is important to point out the noteworthiness of a study on the impact of current educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale. Conclusions drawn from this study may be of use in informing both future educational accountability policies, as well as further research on teacher motivation and morale in the Priority School or low-performing school setting.

Research exists on how accountability impacts educators' motivation. For example, teachers were been found to have low motivation prior to and after working in a school that was on probation for its performance (Finnigan, 2005). Also, teachers have been found to have heightened stress levels when their supervisors increased expectations for their work performance (Valli & Buese, 2007). Research also exists on how accountability has historically had a negative impact on teachers' morale. (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009; Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor, & Leander, 2010; Jackson, 2008; Lutz & Maddirala, 1990). However, what remains to be seen is whether such an impact exists when considering *current* state-level educational accountability policy, which has evolved through the existence of multiple federal-level educational accountability policies (which will be reviewed in the upcoming chapter) over the past several decades. The absence of studies pointing to whether current policy impact teachers' motivation and morale serves as a substantial gap in these bodies of research. This gap contributed to the credence of conducting such a study.

Also, this work is intended to inspire further research on the motivation and morale of Priority School teachers. This would include how to increase teachers' motivation and morale in support of the processes involved in generating the rapid improvement required of Priority Schools, under the dire circumstances that exist within this context, as a means of having such a

label relinquished. As an experienced school leader who has served as an instructional leader in Priority Schools, it is important to the researcher that those who work in this setting are both motivated to take on the work that is needed in order to be successful, while at the same time maintaining a positive and hopeful feeling about the school as a workplace throughout the Priority School process.

Summary of Methodological Framework

The methodological framework of this study will be introduced through a description of the setting and participants of the study, the study's design, and its conceptual framework.

Setting and participants in the study.

The researcher planned to conduct this study in an elementary school and a middle school in a public school district in Michigan. At the time of the study, this school district consisted of several schools, including schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels as well as an alternative education high school. Since the 2013-2014 school year, several of the district's schools had been labeled as Priority Schools in the state of Michigan. What added to the compelling nature of conducting the study in this school district was that it was among the first in Michigan to have the state's School Reform Office exercise its educational accountability policy power to appoint a Chief Executive Officer to oversee the academics and finances of its Priority Schools.

The elementary school identified as one setting of the study was initially identified as a Priority School after the 2012-2013 school year. The school began the 2016-2017 school year on Michigan's Priority Schools List, though was removed from the list in January of 2017. This was due to the significant improvement in student academic achievement made by the school,

resulting in the school moving out of the bottom five percentile of schools on Michigan's Top to Bottom (schools) List.

The second identified setting of this study, a middle school in the same school district, was identified as a Priority School in Michigan following the 2013-2014 school year. The school remained on the state's Priority Schools list in the 2017-2018 school year. In 2017, however, the school entered into a partnership agreement with the Michigan Department of Education in lieu of the previously enacted monitoring processes deployed by the State School Reform Office. Since that time, this school has undergone a formal restructuring, changing its name, instructional program, and grade levels serviced within it. The school no longer serviced students in grade 8, and serviced students in grades 6 and 7 only during the time the study was carried out.

Both schools' instructional staffs included teachers who were present for the entirety of the Priority School experience. This included the time spanning from the initial identification of the school as a Priority School, the experience of meeting the requirements of Michigan's current educational accountability policy, Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c, to the eventual removal of the Priority School label from the school. Teachers who were employed in the elementary school from the 2012-2013 school year to at least the 2016-2017 school year were identified to participate in this study. Teachers who had been employed in the middle school from the 2013-2014 school year to the 2017-2018 school year were also identified as potential participating teacher informants of this study.

Study design.

This study included a qualitative descriptive design. The design adhered to five major qualitative descriptive study principles, which are fully described in Chapter 3 of this work.

Since both school settings were accessible for this study and one data collection instrument was successfully deployed in both settings, this was a rational design selection. The selection of teachers from two different schools to take part in the study also supported a comparison of the data collected from both schools.

Also, the school district identified for this study was a convenient option. At the time of the study, the researcher was an employee of the district. Before the study started, the researcher made a formal request to conduct the study to the school district's superintendent. The superintendent granted his formal approval for the study to take place in the identified school district, specifically in the two schools described earlier in this chapter. This took place prior to the first efforts to implement the methodology. The researcher planned to allow the participating teacher informants and any other interested employees of the identified school district to review the findings of the study once it is completed. This accessibility contributed to the selection of the qualitative descriptive study design for this work.

The identities of each participating teacher informant were kept confidential. All data collected were stored on a secure cloud-based file storage server and were not accessible to anyone other than the researcher.

Conceptual framework.

A detailed description and visual representation of the study's conceptual framework (see *Figure 5*) is found in the third chapter of this work. However, an overview of the framework is provided here as a means of supplementing the background knowledge has hopefully been formed through reviewing the content of this first chapter. These elements include the aforementioned problem and research questions, the overarching foundational theories that have influenced the study, which include the behaviorist theory of Operant Conditioning and the

Expectancy Theory of motivation, the instruments to be used to collect data within the study, the comparative data analysis technique that will be used to refine and strengthen the study's findings, as well as the multiple measures of validity that will be established throughout the process of conducting the study.

The overarching theoretical foundation of this framework included the behaviorist theory of Operant Conditioning, which is suggestive of a certain human response that is conditioned over time when certain environmental factors, such as the presence of educational accountability policy sanctions, exist. Also included in the theory embedded within the conceptual framework was the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, which suggests that motivation to fully engage in a task is formed when variables known as individual's expectancy, valence, and instrumentality are at high or positive levels.

The intended data collection instruments used within this study included a questionnaire (see Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C). These instruments were designed to collect data from participating informants, pertaining to the study's research questions.

The study's comparative data analysis was to include the use of between-method triangulation. Within this process, participants' responses to items from both instruments would be compared. These items were designed to provide information that supports the findings of Research Questions 1 and 5. The validity of the study and its findings would be strengthened if the data derived from the items across instruments were consistent.

Finally, multiple measures of validity were present within the conceptual framework of this study. These measures included credibility, confirmability, and dependability. The researcher also sought to establish each measure of validity by engaging in various activities with

the data collected throughout the course of the study. This process is described in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this work.

Delimitations

The study outlined and referenced throughout this work was developed in large part with its feasibility and manageability in mind. The study's delimitations included its setting and participants, research questions and data collection instruments, along with the concepts of behaviorism, motivation, morale, and accountability have been identified as the key concepts to be investigated within this study.

Conclusions and findings regarding the key concepts of educational accountability policy, teacher motivation and teacher morale were derived within the context of the study's settings. The conclusions and findings from this study were not generalizable. The settings included an elementary school and a middle school from the same school district, both of which were described earlier in this chapter. The researcher served as an employee of the another elementary school in the same school district and chose not to conduct the study in his own school. This choice was made as a means of increasing validity in terms of the data to be collected. Conducting the study with teachers who were not under the direct oversight and supervision of the researcher supported this objective.

Additionally, this study could have taken place in several other schools that were labeled as Priority Schools in the state of Michigan. However, accessing the teachers of the schools within the district that has been selected was more practical for this study. Furthermore, the unique context of the district having the first Chief Executive Officer appointed by the state School Reform Office to supervise the finances and academics of its schools while they were

labeled as Priority Schools provided a supplementary interest in selecting this district for the study.

The study's research questions were written with a goal of tightly reflecting the concepts of teacher motivation, teacher morale, and the Expectancy Theory of Motivation components of expectancy, valence and instrumentality. These questions hold a heavy influence over the items found in both of the study's data collection instruments, the questionnaire and the interview protocol. The questionnaire that was developed for this study largely consists of closed-ended, 3-scale rating questions, with an optional final question available for participating teacher informants to enter a motivation- or morale-affecting aspect that they experience at work, along with the same rating scale. This instrument was designed in this manner as a means of adding a level of control and consistency to the data collection process. Additionally, it was presumed that since the majority of the questionnaire's items are predetermined, more teachers who are invited to take it would complete it. On the other hand, the study's interview protocol featured a semi-structured approach. This allowed the interview facilitators to ask follow up questions to participating teacher informants, prompting them to provide further detail regarding their responses to the questions when appropriate.

Behaviorism, motivation, morale, and accountability were the key concepts embedded within this study. A full description of why these terms have been selected can be found in Chapter 2 of this work. However, the rationale for why these concepts were selected was derived from the researcher's genuine interest in this work. This interest was developed through his professional experiences working in Priority Schools. These aspects aligned to the conceptual framework for this work, thus making them reasonable choices as the study's key

concepts. It is important though, to define these key terms, prior to providing a detailed overview of how they fit into the study's conceptual framework.

Key Definitions

A full explanation of how each of the four key concepts associated with this study are to be defined is presented in Chapter 2 of this work. However, the definitions of these key concepts have been placed in this introductory chapter in order to enhance the existing background knowledge for those interested in this study. These definitions have been developed or selected on account of their fit within this study.

As was stated before, the key concepts of this study include behaviorism, motivation, morale, and accountability. Within the context of this study, behaviorism is defined as the nature of human behavioral responses, developed over time, as conditioned by environmental stimuli. Motivation is defined as the process of one's expectancy, effort, valence, and instrumentality (Vroom, 1964) causing the selection of an action or behavior from an established set of plausible actions or behaviors associated with obtaining a desired outcome. Morale is defined as one's attitudes and feelings towards the organization in general (Steyn, 2002). Finally, accountability can be defined as policies, rules, or regulations that require schools to improve upon student achievement outcomes based on established performance standards or indicators and impose a variety of consequences onto schools based on their demonstrated performance of these standards or indicators. These definitions exert a significant influence on the design of this study, as well as its conceptual framework.

Chapter Summary

The goal of this chapter was to provide a preliminary overview of several key components of the study on the impact of educational accountability policy on teachers'

motivation and morale. The source of inspiration for this study can be found in the problem of keeping teacher motivation and morale at a high level while working through the Priority School process. This topic is of interest to the researcher, due to his experiences working with teachers in Priority Schools. It is the aspiration of the researcher that the findings of the study, which support the answers to these research questions, will inform future educational accountability policy in a way that is more conscientious of teachers' motivation and morale. Five research questions focused on teacher motivation and morale were developed to drive every process within this study. A methodological framework for this qualitative descriptive study were also developed and will be further described in Chapter 3 of this work. This methodology was influenced by the delimitations and definitions of key concepts found within this introductory chapter. As has been pointed out earlier though, it is important to analyze the existing bodies of literature on each of these key concepts prior to moving forward with the formal explanation of the study's methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The primary point of interest in conducting this study was to determine whether educational accountability policy impacted Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand if the presence of the sanctions embedded within such policies changed the intrinsic behaviors of motivation and morale in a negative, no change, or positive manner. The purpose of this literature review is to analyze and synthesize the literature that exists regarding the major aspects associated with this study. The literature review is organized into three major sections.

Section I highlights the existing literature of the key terms and concepts associated with this topic. These key terms and concepts include behaviorism, motivation theory, morale and accountability.

Behaviorism was an appropriate psychological theory to analyze in preparation for this study since this theory has garnered increased attention and acceptance within the educational context (Ozmon, 2012). Furthermore, this theory contains "considerations dealing with the nature of the human being and society, values, the good life, and…assumptions on the nature of reality" (Ozmon, 2012, p. 184). When seeking to determine whether educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' motivation and morale, a strong alignment to such behavioristic qualities becomes visible.

Additional research will be reviewed on motivation theory. Since part of this study sought to identify whether a current educational accountability policy's sanctions impact teachers' motivation, it is important to consider both the theories behind the triggers of motivation, as well as those that suggest how motivation occurs in humans. A review of both

types of motivational theories should point to the theory that best aligns with the prospect of educational accountability policy sanctions impacting teachers' motivation.

Similar to motivation, morale was another key concept within the study. It is important to give equal attention to the existing literature on this concept in order to ascertain how morale has been studied and defined in the context of schools. Furthermore, it is also important to seek whether this variable has been studied based on its interplay with educational accountability policies in previous studies.

Finally, it is essential to review the literature on the concept of accountability. This review will support an appropriate definition of this term in the context of this study. Deriving such a definition supported consistent application of this concept within the study. This same objective held true of all key terms as well.

The second section of the literature review will feature a synthesis of the existing literature on how these terms and concepts interact with each other. The literature reviewed within this section will point to findings that have been deducted in the context of a variety of educational accountability policies. The synthesis within this section will seek to establish a gap in the literature in terms of the interplay between the key terms.

Finally, the third section of this literature review will provide a historical context of U.S. and state level accountability policies, and the subsequent behavioral responses demanded of those who have experienced these policies' sanctions. In order to engage in this review, it is first essential to review and develop an understanding of the key terms and concepts associated with this topic.

Section I: Key Terms and Concepts

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to analyze and synthesize the literature on the key terms related to the topic of interest. A focus will be placed on the literature that verifies the behaviorist element, relating to interest within educational accountability policy. What will also be sought to uncover is how such policy affects teachers' motivation and morale, based on previous studies. Given this purpose, the first objective of this section is to identify the origins of behaviorism, and to define it in the context of this study. The second objective of this section is to form independent and operational definitions of motivation and morale as an outcome of the behaviorist elements within accountability policy. The third and final objective is to highlight whether teachers' motivation and morale were impacted by various educational accountability policies implemented across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Behaviorism.

Prior to engaging in a study on educational accountability and its effect on teacher motivation and morale, it was logical to first establish the theoretical foundation for these concepts. This step is necessary so that a consistent understanding and application of each concept can be derived, supporting the conceptual framework of this study. This study is grounded in the learning theory of behaviorism. The key underlying phenomenon in this theory is the notion of external/environmental factors, or stimuli, such as educational accountability policy sanctions as being the primary drivers of human behaviors or responses, such as teachers' motivation (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Kelley & Finnigan, 2003) and morale levels (Berryhill, Linney & Fromewick, 2009; Byrd-Blake, Afolayan, Hunt, Fabunmi, Pryor & Leander, 2010; Evans, 2000). This section will argue the behaviorist lens as the most appropriate choice for investigating theories associated with motivation and the variable of morale. In addition, this

section will point out that morale is a subset of motivation theory, which is derived from the foundational learning theory of behaviorism. Applying a behavioristic view to the topic of interest might suggest the associations of educational accountability policy as the main environmental factor and the reaction of teachers of low-performing schools to the policy sanctions imposed onto them as the response. In other words, what is the response of teachers to their environment, when current educational accountability policy sanctions have been thrust into the fabric of this environment? In order to further examine these concepts, it was essential to develop an understanding of the foundational theory of behaviorism.

John B. Watson formally announced behaviorism and defended it to the psychological world in the 1920s (Watson, 1913). By that time, many others had contributed to the development of behaviorist theory. Some of the most renowned contributors to the development of this theory included Edward Thorndike, Ivan Pavlov, John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, and Albert Bandura. The work of these theorists pointed out key aspects of this theory which assumes that humans learn or behave based on their interactions with the environment around them. However, it was the foundational work of Edward Thorndike and B. F. Skinner that holds the greatest behaviorist influence over this study on educational accountability policy and teacher morale and motivation.

Edward Thorndike – Law of Effect.

Notably recognized for introducing the concept of using animals in laboratories for psychological study, Edward Thorndike contributed several significant foundational elements to the theory of behaviorism. His work helped to shape the thinking behind “the general potency of wants, interests, purposes and desires in education and elsewhere” (Thorndyke, 1927, p. 212). He conducted tests on animals to observe their responses to a variety of problematic situations.

Thorndyke utilized newborn chicks as the subjects of many of his experiments, including those to determine the environmental factors producing fear within them (Thorndike, 1899).

In a series of experiments that Thorndike conducted on such animals, he concluded that "instinctive reactions are not necessarily definite, perfectly appropriate and unvarying responses to accurately sensed and…estimated stimuli" (Thorndike, 1899, p. 290). Through this finding he pointed out the potential of living things to develop non-instinctive reactions to environmental factors, which at times were more appropriate or successful than the initial instinctive reactions (Woodworth, 1952). Experiments and findings such as this established whether the subject would eventually learn to take the correct action in the problem situation. His experiments showed that over time, the rate unsuccessful responses would lessen, and correct responses would take their place more often (Woodworth, 1959). This led to his conclusion that an effect or outcome (i.e. success or failure, and reward or penalty), resulting from a specific response, was a significant determinant of the response's continuation or elimination, as determined by the animal (Thorndyke, 1927). Thorndike called the phenomenon of continuing behaviors associated with positive outcomes and eliminating behaviors associated with negative outcomes the Law of Effect (Thorndike, 1913). Through his work, Thorndike found the process of animals continuing or eliminating responses to take place over time. He also found that as the cognitive capability of his subjects increased, it took less time for them to take the correct action to the problem situation. Thorndike's studies began with chicks, cats, and dogs, and later progressed to involve monkeys. Unlike other animals, the monkeys were found to have established and continued the intended behavior in the problem situation. However, Thorndike also maintained that across all animals that were tested, it was stimulus-response connections that drove their decisions in continuing or eliminating responses to problem situations.

Later in his career, Thorndike turned his attention to education, applying the Law of Effect to the teaching and learning process. He claimed that the mere process of repetitive drill was an ineffective means of teaching children the respective behaviors associated with obtaining academic success. Thorndike further proposed that the process of experiencing satisfaction from correct responses and from content knowledge gained would motivate a child to achieve academically. It was his work with the concept of the Law of Effect and stimulus-response connections that forged the path for other behaviorism theorists to pave.

B. F. Skinner - Operant Conditioning.

Approximately 40 years after Thorndike established the Law of Effect, the work of Burrhus Frederic (B. F.) Skinner further supported and legitimized this theory. Unlike other philosophical behavior theories, Skinner's findings were based on research conducted on both animals and humans. The work of his behaviorist predecessors drew conclusions on the theory based on studies conducted on either animals or humans. Skinner merged these practices to create new understandings about the relationship between the behavior of living things and their surrounding environment. He argued against the concept of human nature, which associates the concept of humans acting on the environment in order to learn behavior. For example, he suggested that "by arranging a reinforcing consequence, we increase the rate at which a response occurs; by eliminating the consequence, we decrease the rate" (Skinner, 1963, p. 506). Skinner claimed that it was the environment that assumed the initiative in its interaction with humans, arguing that humans "perceive and know to the extent that we respond to stimuli from environmental contingencies" (Ozmon, 2012, p. 191).

While these theorists had shaped the theory's landscape enough for him to unearth further evidence supporting the theory of behaviorism, it was Skinner who revealed the applicability of

the theory across a variety of fields. For example, Skinner proposed that behaviorism, when applied in the educational context, would produce greater results than any other learning theory. With regards to behaviorism-based education, Skinner claimed that "by carefully constructing certain 'contingencies of reinforcement,' it is possible to change behavior quickly and to maintain it in strength for long periods of time" (Skinner, 1986, p. 106). In other words, Skinner believed that it was in the quality of motivational tactics, such as incentives or acknowledgement, as the force that drives people (adults and children) to perform at high levels. Within this theory, the presence of positive incentives act as an environmental factor that produces a human response that is equally positive or desired. He claimed that human behaviors are contingent on the environmental factors of reinforcers, neutral operants, and punishers, all of which are administered after the human's response behavior to the stimulus takes place. Reinforcers are positive or negative environmental responses resulting in the increased likelihood of a desired behavior to be repeated. Neutral operants are the environmental responses that have no effect on increasing or decreasing the likelihood of repeated behavior. Punishers are environmental responses that both weaken behavior and decrease the probability that a behavior will be repeated.

Definition of behaviorism.

Defining behaviorism in the context of this study on educational accountability policy and teacher motivation and morale requires merging the works and conclusions of Thorndike and Skinner. As stated earlier, Edward Thorndike's Law of Effect linked stimuli and responses of objects. Also, he associated the increased likelihood of repeated behavior associated with positive reinforcement or rewards and the reduced likelihood of repeated behavior associated with negative reinforcement, or penalties and/or punishments. Thorndike's findings influenced

the work of subsequent behavioral theorists. Decades later, Skinner refined Thorndike's Law of Effect, applying this concept to humans. Skinner (1991) even went so far as to suggest that the Law of Effect and Operant Conditioning are essentially the same. The major differences between the two are the nature in which Thorndike and Skinner arrived at their findings, and the timing of the administration of rewards or consequences imposed to influence behavior. For this study, behaviorism is defined as the nature of human behavioral responses, developed over time, as conditioned by environmental stimuli. Certainly, there are a myriad of types of stimuli that influence the behavioral response of humans. One such behavioral response is of interest in this study. This response is human motivation.

Motivation theory.

The interaction between environmental factors and the behavioral responses of humans to those factors leads humans to determine how much intrinsic value one places on a certain outcome. This value then influences humans to determine the appropriate actions to take in order to arrive at, or to avoid the outcome, depending on its desirable quality. This process, which describes the concept of motivation, plays a large part in one's decision-making regarding doing what is needed to arrive at a desired outcome. The identification of the role of motivation theory with regards to behaviorist theory is important within the context of this study. Renowned motivation theorist Abraham Maslow (1943) suggested that the two are not the same, and that the theory of motivation is reflective of only a single category of behavioral determinants. To further the importance of considering the concept of motivation for the purposes of this study, Miskel (1972, p.52) claimed that "work motivation must be considered in relationship with other organizational variables of the school, such as...change processes, climate, and incentives." Following this argument, when a change process such as current

educational accountability policy sanctions are present within a school, it would be reasonable to inquire about the relational quality of such a policy on teachers' motivation. In order to do so, identifying the most appropriate lens of motivation theory must take place prior to establishing an operational definition of the term motivation.

There are two major categories of motivation theories: content theories and process theories. Motivation content theories are theories that focus on the factors that motivate humans such as the Need Hierarchy Theory (Maslow, 1943), Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959), and the Existence Relatedness Growth (ERG) Theory (Alderfer, 1969). Each of these theories suggests the natural motivation of humans to meet their basic needs which are arranged into specific categories. Motivation content theories do not describe how motivation occurs in humans.

A more suitable motivation theory category to apply to this study would be found among motivation process theories. Motivation process theories are those that describe how motivation occurs in people. Since this study sought to investigate the impact of educational accountability policy and teacher motivation, it was reasonable to ground the work in motivation process theory, rather than focusing on the idea of satisfying humans' needs. Among the popular motivation process theories are Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1995), and Expectancy Theory which was developed by Victor Vroom (1964). Of the three, the motivation process theory that aligns most to a study of the impact of educational accountability policy on teacher motivation and morale is Expectancy Theory.

Expectancy Theory.

Expectancy Theory is a process theory that focuses on how motivation occurs in people. Vroom (1964, p. 13) connected behaviorist theory to his work on motivation theory by claiming

that “the law of effect…is among the most useful findings for an applied psychology concerned with the control of human behavior.” There are four assumptions undergirding Expectancy Theory: “(1) that people join organizations with expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences… (2) that an individual’s behavior is a result of conscious choice… (3) that people want different things from the organization (and that)… (4) people will choose among alternatives so as to optimize outcomes for them personally” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 104). Based on these assumptions, the foundational elements of outcomes, expectancy, instrumentality, and valence exist. Within this model, outcomes (e.g. accomplishing a work task, or praise for completing the task) are a result of specific work behaviors. Expectancy pertains to how much the worker believes effort will yield a specific level of performance. Instrumentality is one’s perception of the relationship between work performance and the corresponding incentive for that performance. Valence is the measure of the extent to which the employee values or desires a specific outcome, which can either impact the employee’s motivation to perform positively or negatively. In a given work scenario, each key factor is measured with a quantifiable value, typically between 0 (low) and 1 (high). He quantified the strength of these forces by applying “the algebraic sum of the products of the valence of outcomes and expectancies that the outcomes will be attained” (Vroom, 1964, p. 28). Within this theory, employee motivation is at its highest when there are high levels of the expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. However, as one or more of the Expectancy Theory elements measure at low levels, employee motivation will decrease, hitting its lowest point when expectancy, instrumentality, and valence are all at low levels.

There is a body of research that supports Expectancy Theory (Lawler, 1990; Miskel, DeFrain & Wilcox, 1980). This theory has also forecasted job satisfaction and student

achievement in schools Miskel, MacDonald & Bloom, 1983). This study assumed that these qualities are needed in order to rapidly improve the performance outcomes of schools that have educational accountability sanctions imposed upon them. These sanctions typically require schools to implement intensive reform and redesign initiatives that drastically change the way teachers plan and deliver curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as a means of rapidly improving upon student achievement outcomes (e.g. the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011). The interaction of the fundamentals of Expectancy Theory (effort, expectancy, valence, and instrumentality) provides the greatest relevance to the impact of these sanctions on teachers' motivation in low-performing schools.

Definition of Motivation.

As was previously stated, process theories focus on *how* motivation occurs within them. In the context of a study on the impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale, the inclusion of Expectancy Theory should be considered. Expectancy Theory is a suitable choice for application to a study on educational accountability policy and teacher motivation and morale, as the concepts of effort, expectancy, valence, and instrumentality are present within this context. For example, there is an expectancy quality in the amount of belief that teachers have in the idea that their efforts will result in a desired performance level. Also, there is an over-arching instrumentality that relates high levels of performance with the reward of eliminating the educational accountability sanctions imposed onto the school, such as those embedded into the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011, as well as many other shorter-term underlying rewards connected to performance to consider. Finally, how teachers value the rewards or outcomes that are possible under the

premise of working in a low-performing school with educational accountability policy sanctions imposed upon it might suggest their valence.

Given the circumstances of the low-performing school, it is assumed that teachers within this setting desire to achieve the greatest possible outcome for themselves individually and for the school as a whole (e.g. Strauss, 2015). When seeking a relationship between educational accountability policy and teacher motivation and morale, it is important to include a focus on how this policy motivates them (motivation process theory). Taking Expectancy Theory variables into account, for the purposes of this study, motivation will be defined as the selection of an action or behavior from an established set of plausible actions or behaviors associated with obtaining a desired outcome.

Morale.

In order to clarify the conceptual framework of this study on educational accountability policy and teacher motivation and morale, the concept of morale must also be examined, as Steyn (2002) has suggested that morale is an extension of motivation. It is assumed that high levels of employee morale contribute to the success of an organization. Furthermore, employees might suggest what employers can do to improve employee morale levels (Ellenburg, 1972). On the other hand, employers might suggest that maintaining high levels of employee morale can be challenging, based on the existing job requirements and employee performance expectations (Bivona, 2002; Ward, 2015). Given that these factors are typical fixtures in most workplace environments, they and any other workplace environmental factors can contribute to decreased employee morale. Morale is an important variable to consider within the workplace, as it contributes to increased work effort and performance within the organization (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Similar to many motivation theorists' beliefs about motivation, morale also

impacts employees' effort, which can result in a higher job performance level, both individually, and organizationally. In the context of schools, morale has been identified as a necessary component contributing to effective teaching (Covington, 2010). In order to increase student achievement outcomes, effective and quality teaching is needed (Alvarez, 2008; Marzano, 2009). In order to meet the demands of educational accountability policy in a low-performing school, increased student achievement outcomes are needed (e.g. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011) Since morale impacts employee (teacher) performance, and collective employee (teacher) performance contributes to the overall success of the organization (school), morale is another important variable to consider within the context of this study. But what exactly is morale? In order to define this concept, it is necessary to review the definitions of researchers who have studied morale.

Definition of morale.

In contrast to behaviorism and motivation, there is no formal theory supporting the concept of morale, however, researchers have made efforts to define morale within their work. These definitions include multiple common terms or themes. Common morale terms include one's attitudes (Steyn, 2002), feelings (Evans, 2000), or emotional state (Demirtas, 2010) toward their workplace. This suggests that in a formalized definition for the concept of morale in a study on educational accountability policy and teacher motivation and morale, a representation of these terms should also be present. Another recurring term found in researchers' definitions is the concept of one's needs (Brion, 2015; Evans, 2000; Steyn, 2002) and how these needs contribute to his or her attitudes and feelings about their workplace. One definition of morale is most comprehensive and appropriate when these themes and terms are considered. Steyn (2002) defined morale as one's attitudes and feelings towards the organization in general. For the

purposes of this study on educational accountability policy and teacher motivation and morale, Steyn's (2002) definition of morale will be applied. This leaves accountability as the remaining key term to define within this study.

Accountability.

As is the case for behaviorism, motivation, and morale, it is important to establish a suitable definition for accountability, as the term categorizes the type of policy of interest in this study. The concept of accountability has been studied by a variety of researchers in the field of education. While some researchers have pointed to the difficulty in defining the term (Ahearn, 2000; Browder, 1973, Klau, 2010), it is not an impossible task.

Definition of Accountability.

Several observable themes can be found when studying the literature that provides definitions of accountability. For example, one such theme found in the existing research is that accountability holds educators responsible for what they are expected to produce (Browder, 1973; Darling-Hammond & Ascher, 1991; Krystal & Henrie, 1972; Ryan, 2011). These expectations for production include implementing curricular and testing policies, rules, and regulations (Darling-Hammond & Ascher, 1991; Klau, 2010). Also, a key expectation within educational accountability focuses on the student achievement outcomes produced by schools (Browder, 1973; Ryan, 2011). Looking through a narrower lens, the theme of *improving* upon these outcomes is evident (Fuhrman, 2003; Klau, 2010; Reeves, 2004; Ryan, 2011). These outcomes are typically compared against established performance standards (Ahearn, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Ascher, 1991) or performance indicators (Klau, 2010; Ryan, 2011; Strum, 1995). Finally, researchers have included the presence of consequences for not meeting

established performance standards or indicators in their explanations of accountability (Fuhrman, 2003; Klau, 2010).

Each of these themes was taken into consideration when defining accountability. For the purposes of this study, accountability will be defined as the policies, rules, or regulations that require schools to improve upon student achievement outcomes based on established performance standards or indicators and impose a variety of consequences onto schools based on their demonstrated performance of these standards or indicators.

Section II: Synthesis – An Integration of the Study's Major Concepts Explaining How Accountability Policy Is A Form of Behaviorism

This section of the literature review focuses on how behaviorism, motivation and morale relate to accountability policy. First, the relationship between behaviorist theory and accountability policy is examined. Second, motivation theory and accountability policy are highlighted. Third, the interplay between morale and accountability policy is featured. Finally, this section will synthesize the impact of educational accountability policy on motivation and morale. The objective of the synthesis is to point out defined relationships between these concepts. These relationships will further influence the theoretical construct and conceptual framework of this study.

Behaviorism, motivation, and morale.

This study suggests that educational accountability policy sanctions are an example of how policy shapes behavior and how behavior shapes motivation and morale. As was previously established, behaviorism is the nature of human behavioral responses, developed over time, as conditioned by environmental stimuli. In this study, educational accountability policy is viewed as a form of behaviorism. Educational accountability policy sanctions, or the consequences imposed onto low-performing schools, will be viewed as the environmental conditions that then

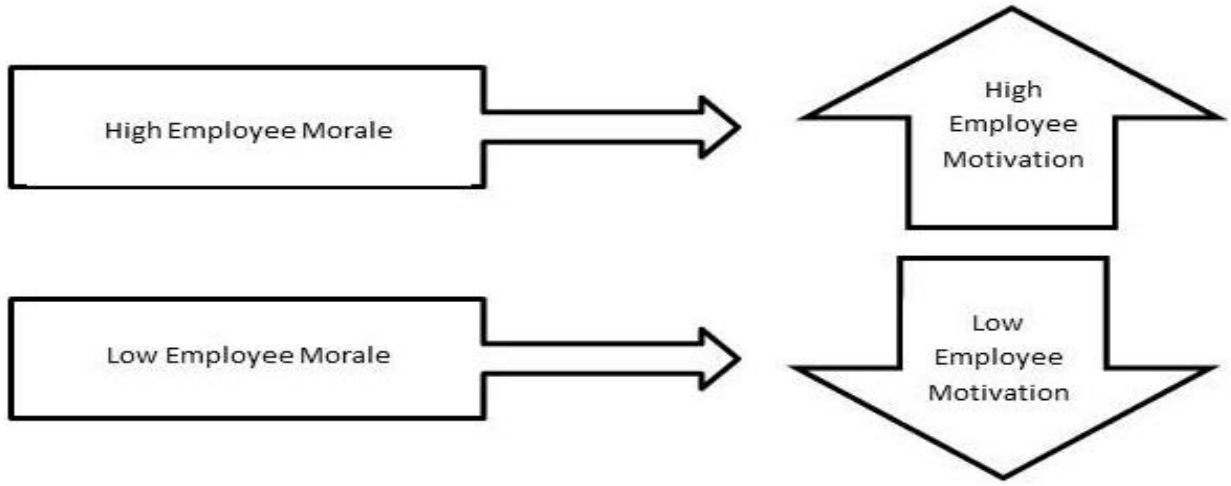
contribute to teachers' motivation and morale levels, which are the primary behaviors of focus in the study. Skinner's operant conditioning theory would suggest that the sanctions imposed onto low-performing schools would act as negative reinforcement implemented in response to these schools' inability to outperform the bottom 5% of schools in the state. It is presumed that these negative reinforcing consequences will have a similarly negative effect on teachers' motivation and morale levels.

It is the objective of this study to examine how the behavioral responses of motivation and morale occur in teachers of low-performing schools when educational accountability policy sanctions exist as environmental conditions. Since motivation process theories are those that focus on how motivation occurs in humans, it would be most logical to look at this study through the motivation process theory lens. The Expectancy Theory of Motivation (Vroom, 1964) best embodies how Priority School teachers' behavioral responses to educational accountability policy sanctions are determined. Educational accountability policy sanctions are designed to impact low-performing schools through their selection of one of a series of available reform and redesign strategies, as defined by the policy. Through the Expectancy Theory lens, a teacher will develop a certain level of motivation to exert individual effort to do his or her part to engage in the school's required reform activities. It would also be assumed that high motivation levels applied to these activities would then improve student achievement outcomes (first-level outcome). These improvements would then lead to the school's removal from the state's low-performing schools list (second-level outcome) as a result. Within this model, the motivation that a teacher exerts in this setting is the result of the *expectancy* that his or her *efforts* will result in the individual or collective performance *outcome* needed to remove the school's low-performing status. Also within the model, teachers must subscribe to the suggested

instrumentality (relationship) between the improved performance outcomes and removal from the low-performing schools list and the educational accountability sanctions that are imposed onto schools on the list. Finally, in order for motivation to occur in teachers of low-performing schools, they must hold high *valence* (value) for improved performance outcomes as well as for the school's removal from the low-performing schools list.

Morale can be related to motivation (Steyn, 2002). Within the Expectancy Theory, outcomes such as performance and rewards are the result of effort and the level of effort one gives is based on their expectancy that their effort will result in a particular level of performance. Furthermore, researchers have found that employees' morale levels can dictate the amount of effort they put into their work as well as their overall performance (Finnegan & Gross, 2007; Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2009; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). This research suggests that when one's morale is low in the workplace, it is likely that there will be a similarly low rate of motivation to put forth the effort, time, and concentration needed to improve performance (Tubbs & Garner, 2008). The result of low motivation and morale will likely be a reduction in the overall quality of performance exhibited by the individual and of the overall performance of the organization (Tubbs & Garner, 2008). Under this premise, it is presumable that when employees' morale levels are high, high motivation levels will likely exist as well. On the other hand, when employees' morale levels are low, decreased motivation levels are likely to exist as well (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1. Morale's Impact on Motivation



This connection supports the idea of studying both concepts of motivation (through the lens of Expectancy Theory) and morale, as impacted by educational accountability policy.

Behaviorist theory and accountability policy.

Operant conditioning, which is a form of behaviorism, is based on the presumption that human behavior is based on anticipated consequences or rewards. Educational accountability policy includes such behaviorist aspects as it assumes that potential sanctions or rewards embedded within it will drive educators to make the desired behavioral response to improve student achievement outcomes. Many states' educational accountability policies place a high value on their statewide assessments and how schools perform on these assessments when defining the schools' performance level, categorization, and potential rewards or consequences issued to them. For schools across America, one of the unintended effects of educational accountability policy and the emphasis on state test results was how schools redefined their approach to curriculum and instruction. For example, as educators worked to accelerate student achievement per their performance on these state assessments, previously-implemented curricula fell by the wayside, and instructional changes such as a "narrowed curriculum" and "teaching to the test" quickly became commonplace in American schools (Berry, Turchi, Johnson, Hare &

Owens, 2003; Boardman & Woodruff, 2004; Cruz & Brown, 2010; Darling-Hamilton & Rustique-Forrester, 2005; Hamilton, Stecher, Marsh, McCombs, Robyn, Russell, Naftel & Barney, 2007; Irons, Carlson, Lowery-Moore & Farrow, 2007; Parke, Lane & Stone, 2006; Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos & Miao, 2003; Taylor et al., 2003; Vernaza, 2012). Schools and educators have since experienced additional pressure to show annual improvement and reduce achievement gaps between all major student subgroup categories on these tests as a means of steering clear of educational accountability policy sanctions imposed by the state (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Berry et al, 2003; Boardman & Woodruff, 2004; Darling-Hamilton & Rustique-Forrester, 2005; Pedulla et al., 2003; Vernaza, 2012; Wallace, 2012). This focus on preparing for these assessments is thought to have restricted the teaching and learning process as well as removing the creativity and autonomy that once existed in curricular planning and delivery (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004). Giroux and Schmidt (2004) suggest that "under such conditions…behaviorism becomes the preferred model of pedagogy and substitutes a mind-numbing emphasis on methods and techniques over pedagogical practices that are critical, moral and political in substance" (p. 222). Accountability policy that is accompanied by sanctions that are administered based on schools' performance on state assessments, has been historically found to change the professional behaviors of educators (Cocke, Buckley & Scott, 2011; Cruz & Brown, 2010; Darling-Hamilton & Rustique-Forrester, 2005; Hamilton et al., 2007; Irons, et al., 2007). Eessentially, the policy prompts teacher behaviors that contribute to a school's overall performance with the goal of ranking among the highest-performing schools in the state. However, for 5% of schools in the state of Michigan, it is perceived that something is amiss with the collective efforts of those who work within them. The state's current educational accountability policy suggests that intensive reform and redesign initiatives, closing and

restarting as a charter school, or closing permanently as the only ways to fix them (Public Act 451of 1976, Mi. Compiled Laws §380.1280c, 2011).

The literature points to the presence of behaviorism within educational accountability policy, as researchers have suggested that educational accountability policies or their sanctions influence changes in teachers' behavior to support improved student achievement outcomes (Finnigan and Gross, 2007; Hanushek, Machin & Woessmann, 2011). Operant conditioning suggested that human behaviors depend on reinforcers, neutral operants, and punishers, all of which are administered after the human's response to the stimulus takes place. One of the founding principles of educational accountability policies is "the belief that negative sanctions and public reporting will serve as incentives to motivate individual staff to direct their attention and behavior toward desired outcomes and focus their effort on student" (Finnigan, 2010, p. 161). Through the behaviorist lens, the accountability policy and accompanying sanctions and rewards are the stimuli that prompt human behavioral responses, which are typically assumed to strive to achieve rewards and to avoid sanctions. Educational accountability policy, and the response of those who it is imposed onto, makes this phenomenon an example of behaviorism.

Motivation theory and accountability policy.

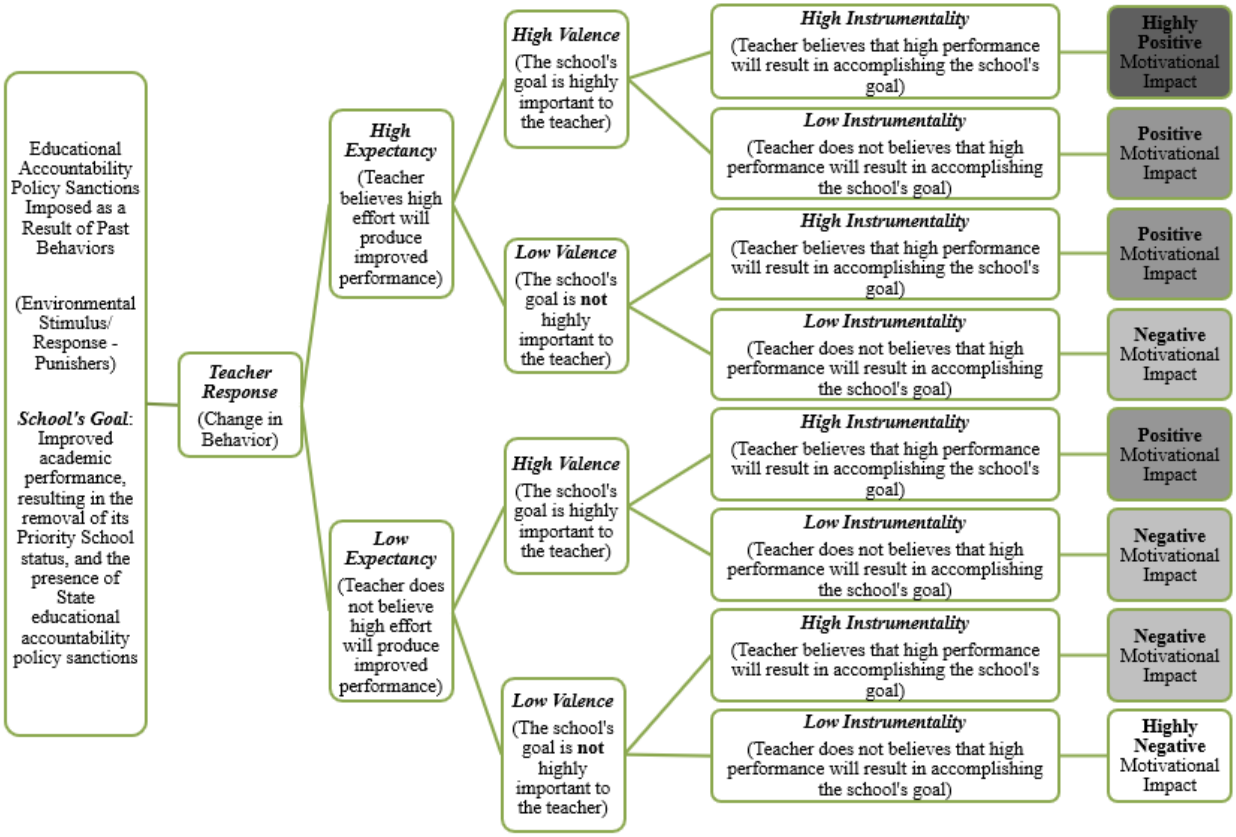
Like the presence of behaviorist theory, when examining the impact of educational accountability policy on teacher motivation, the influence of Expectancy Theory, a motivation process theory, can be observed and applied throughout this phenomenon. A significant component to the conceptual framework of this study was the connectedness between behaviorism and motivation theory, and specifically between the fundamentals of operant conditioning and expectancy theory. In the context of this study, teachers' motivation levels were regarded as the human response to the environmental stimulus of the educational

accountability policy sanctions (punisher), which are imposed onto their schools. First though, the literature on the impact of educational accountability policy on teacher motivation should be considered.

There is a body of literature that indicates educational accountability policy impacts teacher motivation. When educational accountability sanctions are imposed onto low-performing schools, increased monitoring of instructional practices are inevitable. Valli and Buese (2007) found that teachers' level of organizational commitment can decrease when their work becomes excessively regulated. Decreased teacher commitment is a motivational response that is not likely to support a low-performing school through its mandated reform requirements. Motivational responses of teachers can also be negatively impacted when the individual's goals are not aligned with the policy, when concerns of insufficient time or resources to accomplish mandated goals exist, or when emotions, such as frustration, are present within them (Finnegan, 2005). This sense of frustration can be caused when teachers who are working very hard do not get the results they hope to get on critical high-stakes tests which are the driving force behind many educational accountability policies. In fact, Boardman and Woodruff (2004) found that the very presence of these tests, and the added pressure associated with them, caused teachers to have little energy to learn and implement new instructional practices. Other research points to a minimal impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation. Finnegan (2005, p. 2) found that "teachers appear to be motivated by accountability policies…but the motivational response is somewhat weak." Whether it is a weak motivational response, or a more significant motivational response, the literature suggests that a teacher's motivation will be impacted by educational accountability policy. Nevertheless, it is also important to understand how this motivation occurs when educational accountability policies are present.

There is also literature on teacher motivation and educational accountability policy that suggests the presence and influence of expectancy within this dynamic. As has been stated, academic achievement of students is the strongest determining factor that goes into a school's status or identification, per its respective educational accountability policy. Expectancy, which has shown to have a significant impact on improving student achievement outcomes (Finnegan, 2005), is a critical variable to consider. For example, Finnegan (2010) found that when low-performing schools have high expectancy teachers, these schools had their probationary status removed faster than similar schools with low expectancy teachers working within them. Other studies have substantiated the importance of expectancy, even when compared among the other Expectancy Theory components. For example, when comparing expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, teacher expectancy was the strongest predictor of school improvement (Kelley, Heneman & Milanowski, 2002). Furthermore, similar to the concept of expectancy, Valli and Buese (2007, p. 553) pointed out that "teachers are motivated to enact changes they believe in." Research has also shown teacher expectancy to be related to their effectiveness (Miskel, 1982) and to their level of job satisfaction (Miskel et al., 1980). While Expectancy Theory considers all its components to hold high significance in how motivation is caused in people, the literature on educational accountability policy and this motivation theory points to the concept of expectancy as the most significant factor in meeting the performance expectations mandated by the sanctions within such policies. Applying Expectancy Theory, as well as Operant Conditioning to an investigation on how educational accountability policy impacts teacher's motivation in low-performing (priority) schools is reflected in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2. Operant Conditioning, Education Accountability Policy, Expectancy Theory & Teacher Motivation



Morale and accountability policy.

Past studies have indicated that educational accountability policies that have been implemented at the federal or state level within the last twenty-five years. Some of these policies include the Colorado Education Reform Act of 1993, the 2001 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and North Carolina's "The New ABCs of Public Education" of 1996. These previous policies were found to have a negative impact on teachers' morale levels (Hamilton et al., 2007; Jones, Jones, Hardin & Chapman, 1999; Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2003). In fact, trends of low teacher morale in schools have become more apparent as educational accountability policies have become more common and stringent (Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2009;

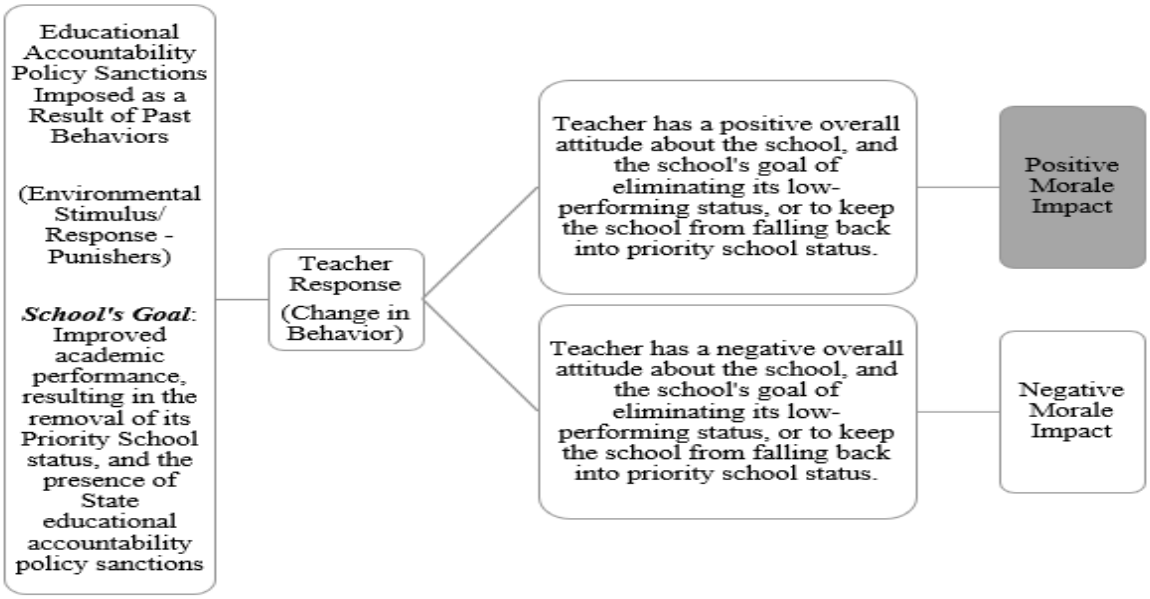
Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). State-level educational accountability policies enacted in response to NCLB such as the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011 call for intensified regulations and increased monitoring in the planning, delivery, and monitoring of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, while schools work their way off the low-performing, or Priority Schools list. However, work by Valli and Buese (2007) suggests that teachers can experience job dissatisfaction, burnout, and early departure from the field of education when their work is excessively regulated. Furthermore, the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011 and educational accountability policies similar to it include a reliance on student performance on mandated high stakes state assessments, and publicize schools' overall performance on these assessments to the public, whether they are high-performing, low-performing, or somewhere in the middle. The effects of educational accountability policies' mandate of statewide high-stakes assessments alone have resulted in reduced teacher morale (Nichols & Berliner, 2005; Tucker, 2014; Veranza, 2012). This is likely because "teachers hold negative views of standardized testing" (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004, p. 546). In addition, regarding standards-based assessments, teachers have connected such tests with decreases in morale, as well as negative impacts on their instruction (Hamilton et al., 2007). Boardman and Woodruff (2004) also found that teachers shared their anxiety about their ability to prepare students for high-stakes state tests. However, teachers' morale is negatively impacted by more than just the presence of these state-mandated high stakes assessments. It is also important to consider the impact on teacher morale after students complete these assessments.

Other research points to the negative impact of publicizing schools' state assessment scores on teacher morale. For example, in a survey, Taylor et al. (2003) found that teachers suggested that the Colorado Student Assessment Program had "negative effects…on faculty

morale and teachers' anticipated fears about the School Report Card" (p. 52). These report cards include schools' overall performance on high-stakes state assessments, which can be compared to other schools in the state. Also, in their review of the literature on this topic, Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas (2000) pointed to teachers' feelings of anxiety, shame, reduced respect, and pressure to produce high test scores when school test scores and school rankings are publicized. Furthermore, Jones et al. (1999) reported a sense of embarrassment and guilt teachers experience when the scores from their schools are published. A common thread among these findings is the presence of a negative impact on feelings and attitudes of teachers caused by the practice of publicizing schools' performance on state assessments, and how this performance lends to a school's ranking, which is also made available to the public.

As has been pointed out, previously implemented educational accountability policies have led to negatively impacted teacher morale. In fact, research by Berry et al. (2003) found that teachers felt attacked by these policies. Although what remains to be seen is whether this phenomenon still exists in the context of current educational accountability policy, such as the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011. What is of interest to the researcher is whether the impact of educational accountability policy on teacher morale has remained or changed when the most current version of such a policy, inclusive of the latest accountability nuances, is studied. The impact of current educational accountability policy on the morale of teachers in low-performing Priority Schools is theorized in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3. Impact of Education Accountability Policy on Teacher Morale



Impact of educational accountability policy on motivation and morale.

Teacher motivation and morale are significant variables to consider in the context of a low-performing school that has educational accountability policy sanctions imposed onto it. Educational accountability policies typically require these schools to improve teaching and learning in a rapid fashion, and "if educator performance in schools is to be improved, it is necessary to pay attention to the kind of work environment that…increases their motivation and morale" (Steyn, 2002, p. 84). This study assumes that teacher motivation and morale are essential factors to the school's ability of achieving its goal of eliminating its low-performing categorization. Prior to engaging in such a study, it is essential to understand the previous research conducted in this area. Existing bodies of research regarding the impact of accountability policy on both teacher motivation and teacher morale have produced findings that are significant to the conceptual model and design of this study.

There is existing research regarding the impact of educational accountability policies on teachers' motivation. One study has produced distinct conclusions pertaining to the impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation, as teachers tend to agree that teacher motivation is critical to classroom effectiveness and school improvement (e.g. Ofoegbu, 2004). It is worth noting though that research pointing to the prospect of accountability policies positively motivating teachers exists, as well (Finnegan & Gross, 2010; Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi, 2002). This study intended to examine this phenomenon in the setting of schools that have already received labels such as "failing," "low-performing," or "priority" schools, and are currently experiencing educational accountability policy sanctions imposed onto them.

Researchers who have carried out studies situated in a low-performing school have identified factors that decrease motivation on the job (Finnegan & Gross, 2007; Comber & Nixon, 2009). For example, when teachers experience decreased expectancies and demoralization, their motivation is negatively affected (Finnegan & Gross, 2007). Also, when the goals of the policy and the teacher aren't aligned, teachers' motivation in these settings is decreased (Finnegan, 2010). Finally, teachers struggle to sustain effort or energy when their schools remain categorized as low-performing, experience accountability policy sanctions, or must design curricular or instructional reform initiatives (Finnegan & Gross, 2007; Comber & Nixon, 2009). Conclusions such as these are suggestive of the negative impact on teacher motivation caused by educational accountability policy in the setting of the low-performing school. Another alarming trend can be found when reviewing the literature on educational accountability policy and teacher morale.

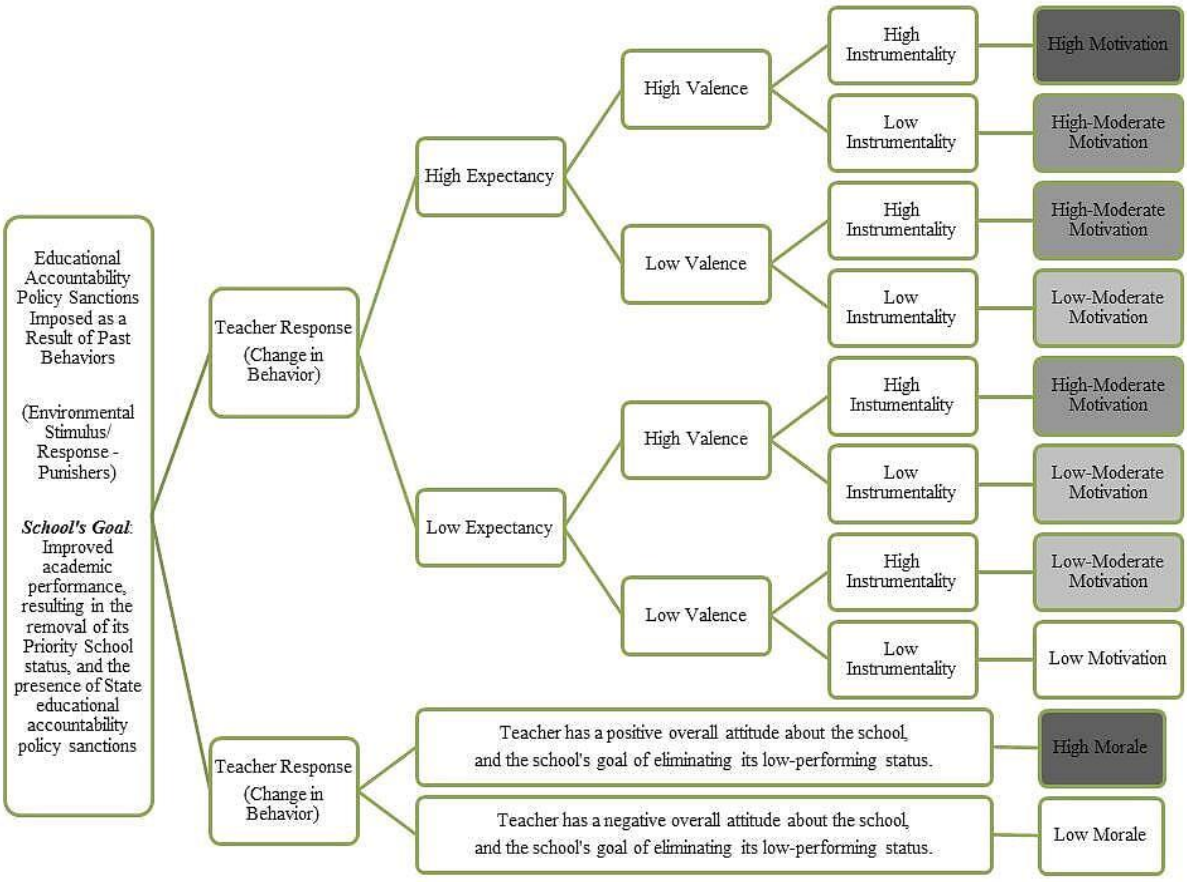
As this study sought to investigate the impact of current educational accountability policy on the motivation of teachers in low-performing schools, it was intended to examine the impact

of the policy on teacher morale as well. Before exploring the impact of a current educational accountability policy on the morale of teachers in a low performing school, it is essential to first understand the relevance and significance of teacher morale in the school setting. Educational accountability policy sanctions similar to those embedded within the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011 include language inclusive of a school-wide redesign or reform process, under the added supervision of a state-level educational authority. Suggestive by its description, this process requires schools to eliminate previous instructional and curricular practices and to replace them with new and proven practices. This requires teachers of these schools to make substantial long-term changes in their work behavior, in order to improve the overall performance of the school. It is this aspect of work behavior that provides the relevance of morale in this discussion, since there is a prominent link between morale and teachers' work behavior. Studies suggest that when teachers' morale is high, their effort, quality teaching, efficiency, or productivity levels will be high as well (Finnegan & Gross, 2007; Mackenzie, 2007; Nicholas-Omoregbe, 2009; Tubbs & Garner, 2008; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Researchers have also pointed out the impact that educational accountability policies and their sanctions can have on teacher morale in the setting of the low-performing school. Those working in this setting may face feelings of humiliation resulting from receiving a "failing" label that is announced to the public (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). Also, research suggests that teachers' morale levels are likely to decrease due to the increased work expectations (Jackson, 2008), pressure to improve test scores (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010; Jackson, 2008) or failure to obtain established achievement targets (Finnegan & Gross, 2007). Educational accountability policies have impacted teachers' morale by increasing stress or "burnout" levels, or by decreasing their general well-being (Berryhill, et al., 2009). Finally, when Byrd-Blake et al.

(2010) conducted a study in two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, results indicated that the pressures associated with educational accountability policy negatively affect the motivation of teachers in the elementary setting, rather than the secondary setting. This finding emphasizes the importance of furthering the body of research focused on educational accountability policy and teacher motivation, situated in the low-performing elementary school setting, in the context of current educational accountability policy.

This review of the literature on this topic suggests that the presence of sanctions from a past educational accountability policy in a low-performing school can influence teachers' morale either negatively or positively. This phenomenon is suggested by the combined theoretical framework found in *Figure 2*. What remains to be seen is if a current educational accountability policy, such as the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011, will have an impact on teachers' motivation and morale today. *Figure 4* contains a full theoretical framework of this concept, inclusive of both motivation and morale.

Figure 4. Operant Conditioning, Expectancy Theory, Educational Accountability Policy, Motivation and Morale



Morale affects effort and performance. Effort and performance are featured components of the Expectancy Theory model of motivation. Motivation is needed to demonstrate the behavioral change that is required of teachers in low-performing elementary schools with educational accountability policy sanctions imposed onto them. There is a gap in the literature that examines these variables through the behaviorist lens in the context of low-performing elementary schools with sanctions from the most current educational accountability policy imposed onto them. The study's literature review produced no literature on the impact of current educational accountability policy on teachers' morale and motivation. This finding pointed to the need to conduct further investigation of these interactions in the setting of low-performing

elementary schools. Addressing this gap in the research was one of the primary objectives of this study.

Section III: Overview of National and State Accountability Movements as a Distinct Policy Form of Behaviorism

The final section of this chapter is a historical review of educational accountability policy. First, the educational accountability policies enacted at the federal level by the United States government, beginning in the late 1900s are reviewed. Following the federal policy review is a review of state-level educational accountability policies, specifically those of Michigan, in response to the federal level policies. Finally, considering all the literature reviewed in this chapter, a gap in the literature is identified.

U.S. educational accountability policy.

At the local level, education is influenced, monitored and evaluated by educational accountability policies that are established at the state level. These state level policies are a response to larger federal policies that have been enacted in the United States throughout the nation's history. Since the 1980s though, the federal government has strengthened its practice of enacting policies that hold states accountable for the performance of their schools. During this decade, the primary catalyst in the movement for stronger accountability in the nation's public schools was the public release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). While this publication itself was not an educational accountability policy, the report did initiate the preliminary sense of urgency in sweeping educational reforms across the nation, citing America's plummeting place among global competitors in the areas of industry, commerce, and intellect (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report pointed to the nation's public education system, which was performing at lower levels as compared to many of its international counterparts, as

the primary contributing factor of this decline. What sparked this sense of urgency were the reports' claims, which at the time suggested that "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 13). The report did not dictate what would be required of schools in the legislative sense. However, it did suggest educational reforms based on high expectations and goals for all students, and those that ensure that educators do everything possible to assure students reach the goals (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The influence of this report prompted a series of educational policies that demanded more of the nation's public schools that is still realized over thirty years later. Each subsequent federal level policy included school accountability components within it (e.g. America 2000, 1991; Goals 2000, 1994; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option, 2011).

The 1990s produced some of the first significant nationwide responses to *A Nation at Risk* (America 2000, 1991; Goals 2000, 1994; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option, 2011). Among the first of the federal-level responses to *A Nation at Risk* was the implementation of a national standardized assessment called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Beginning in 1990, NAEP assessments were made available to schools on a voluntary basis. These assessments tested students on core content areas. It also provided comparative data at the national level in terms of the academic achievement of students across the states where schools participated. The very next year *America 2000: An Education Strategy (America 2000)*, a long-term national strategy to improve the nation's schools, was developed and announced. This strategy was designed to accomplish six national education goals in nine years. Authors of *America 2000* stated that it "honors local

control, relies on local initiative, affirms states and localities as the senior partners in paying for education and recognizes the private sector as a vital partner, too" (1991, p. 11). This strategy emphasized the limited involvement of the federal government in public education. However, it also stated that "Washington can help by setting standards…contributing some funds, providing flexibility in exchange for accountability and pushing and prodding then pushing and prodding some more" (1991, p. 12). The arrival of content standards into the discussion of educational policy sparked the presence of accountability within such policy. Content standards alone are an accountability tool as they identify state-level material that teachers are held accountable for teaching (Mills, 2008). More importantly, the strategy called for additional educational accountability measures such as a higher dependence on national achievement assessments and mechanisms such as school report cards to report the progress of schools nationwide. These report cards would be derived from schools' performance on the NAEP, which was authorized to be administer in each of the 50 states for the collection of fourth, eighth and twelfth grade academic achievement data. However, this strategy presented only strong recommendations, rather than accountability requirements onto states' educational programs. In 1994, the trend of federal education policies *suggesting* what states should be doing to improve upon their performance was eliminated in lieu of policies that *required* what states were to do in order to improve performance. During this year, the federal government enacted the first of these policies when *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (*Goals 2000*), as well as the *Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)* were signed into law. Similar to *America 2000*, *Goals 2000* focused on accomplishing a number of national goals for improving public education. However, this policy required all states to complete, submit, and implement a state improvement plan that reports how funding provided by the federal government was used to develop and implement

wide-ranging education reform initiatives to support all students in reaching academic standards (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1994). These plans had to show an alignment to the national goals set forth by the policy. The policy also called for a panel to release a national report card to indicate the collective progress made towards accomplishing these goals each year. Also, in 1994, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized as the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA). IASA included requirements such as high standards for all students, professional learning on how to teach to the standards for teachers, and accountability for results (Riley, 1995). It required particularly each state to establish and implement a common statewide assessment, aligned to its established content standards, which would be administered to students in the grade levels identified by the state. This plan also held states accountable for assuring equitable learning opportunities for Title I students, submitting plans and reports for curriculum standards and test results annually, and for holding school districts accountable for making acceptable progress by implementing these plans (Mills, 2008). Under IASA, school accountability was connected to the additional Title I funding that schools received to support the implementation of their school improvement plans. If schools were found to be out of compliance with the implementation process embedded within their approved school improvement plans, they ran the risk of losing or having to pay back the supplemental Title I funds they were initially awarded, thus crippling the ability to improve their performance. Furthermore, the concept of schools of choice was introduced at the federal level under IASA, as it allowed funding for the development of charter schools. In the 1990s, it was clear that states, districts, and schools would experience higher levels of accountability than ever before. This heightened level of accountability only became more present and intense in the millennium.

With the landscape for educational accountability policy taking shape in the 1990s, the early 2000s brought forth perhaps the most controversial federal educational accountability policy in the nation's history. In January of 2002, ESEA was once again reauthorized, and became widely known as NCLB. One of the pillars of NCLB was its accountability requirements (Mills, 2008). This policy brought forth the highest level of accountability yet, with language requiring that by the year 2014, 100% of all the nation's students would be proficient in English language arts and mathematics, per their results on the respective mandatory state assessment. This landmark policy also intensified the punitive measures, or sanctions, imposed onto schools that did fall short of meeting its expectations as compared to the policies which preceded it. Previously, the primary tool for accountability sanctions fell within the ability of the government to make schools pay back or outright lose categorical funds to support the efforts they pledged to put in place to support student achievement. Under NCLB, sanctions would be imposed upon schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by their state. Under previous policies, the primary means of punishing schools for not being compliant with embedded mandates was the loss of categorical funding. This expectation also applied to the various demographic subgroup categories of students found in any one school. Under this policy, all schools in receipt of federal funds (typically through Title I) failing to make proficiency targets or Annual Measurable Goals (AMOs) would be required to provide additional supports to students. These additional supports included options such as the provision of supplemental educational (or tutoring) services, as well as home district-provided transportation to higher achieving schools within the same school district (Mills, 2008). Additional consequences for not making AYP or the established proficiency targets included loss of Title I funding, replacement of staff, putting a new curriculum in place, reorganizing staffing in these

schools, and closing these schools to reopen as charter schools. The policy also required that all teachers hold the credential of "highly qualified," or be immediately dismissed from their positions.

Similar to the educational accountability policies that preceded it, NCLB continued the requirement of "rigorous content standards, describing what elementary and secondary students must know and be able to do in the content areas of math, language arts and reading, and science" (Mills, 2008, p. 12). The policy also required all schools to assure that no less than 95% annual student participation on the state assessment was obtained. This policy continued through the first decade in the 2000s and was supplemented by legislation known as the Race to the Top, which was enacted in 2009.

According to the United States Department of Education's *Race to the Top Program Executive Summary* (2009), this competitive grant program was "designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes…closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers" (p. 2). This program aimed to reward states that had the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future (United States Department of Education, 2009). However, these funds were not awarded to every state in the nation. States to receive these funds were selected by the federal government, leaving many states without this limited additional funding. States that were awarded these funds were held accountable for assuring that their schools that benefitted from this program followed through on their proposed plans for accelerating student achievement outputs. This program and NCLB both continued on into the early 2010s, though federal education

accountability policy was primed for another change shortly thereafter. This change would be greatly influenced by the requirements embedded within Race to the Top.

The consensus of NCLB was that the goals were too demanding upon schools (United States Department of Education, 2015), and U.S. legislators agreed with this perspective. In Congress, a lack of bipartisan support for reauthorizing this legislation existed (Hirshfeld Davis, 2015). Furthermore, NCLB had promoted many unintended behaviors such as states lowering their standards, an emphasis on punishing, rather than rewarding schools, and determining schools' overall performance based on their students' annual scores on state assessments, rather than focusing on their growth from year-to-year (Unknown, 2016).

These circumstances compelled President Barack Obama to enact a change in federal-level educational accountability policy. This change took place in 2011, when legislation was enacted allowing states to submit a flexibility waiver from the language of NCLB. This policy came to be known as the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option. This legislation included requirements that greatly resembled the Race to the Top mandates for the adoption of standards, educator support, and emphasis on low-performing schools (United States Department of Education, 2016). In order to qualify for such flexibility though, the federal government would "require states to adopt standards for college and career readiness, focus improvement efforts on 15 percent of the most troubled schools, and create guidelines for teacher evaluations based in part on student performance" (McNeil & Klein, 2011). This policy continued to demand that schools in all states strive for improved student achievement outcomes, though only required that 85% of students in its schools become proficient in ELA and math by the year 2022. Also, this legislation continued the 95% participatory rate of students on state assessments requirement, as well as the use of AMOs to be used by schools to identify annual improvement rates. An

accountability measure that set the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option apart from similar policies that preceded it was the targeting of schools that fell within the bottom 5% of schools across the nation. In fact, under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option guidelines, there is language that requires states "to implement aggressive interventions in the lowest 5 percent of schools" (McNeil & Klein, 2011). These schools, also known as Priority Schools, were required to receive the most intensive sanctions per each state's interpretation of this policy. Also, under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option, "states must also identify another 10 percent of schools that struggle with particularly low graduation rates, low performance for specific subgroups of students (such as those with disabilities), or high achievement gaps" (McNeil & Klein, 2011). Schools that fall into this distinction, labeled as focus schools, were to receive sanctions specific to these deficiencies. It was incumbent upon the states to complete a waiver explaining the specific sanctions that would be imposed onto their priority and focus schools. Furthermore, "under ESEA flexibility, many states were required to submit updated priority and focus school lists" (Whalen, 2015). Furthermore, the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option required regular administrator and teacher evaluations to be implemented for all states with approved waivers. While the ESEA Flexibility Waiver option was widely adopted by states throughout the nation, the federal government has since revised its accountability measures on schools once again in the most current educational accountability policy.

The most current form of federal level educational accountability policy came when ESEA was again reauthorized, though this time, as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This policy was signed into law in 2015. While the state level interpretation of this federal policy remains in progress, the language of this policy includes similar and contrasting features of accountability when compared to the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Option. For example, ESSA

"requires…that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers" (ESSA, 2015), keeping the theme of required academic curricular standards alive today.

Schools and districts are still required to report students' progress on these standards through their performance on annual state assessments, like the concept that was introduced in the 1990s and has been present since then. The policy also "maintains an expectation that there will be accountability and action to effect positive change in our lowest performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time" (ESSA, 2015).

The trend of "accountability and action," or sanctions and consequences as they are better known by those who work in these schools, have been in place since the time that these policies threatened to take away federal funds from schools for noncompliance with their guidelines. ESSA also requires schools that are identified for improvement to enact a reform plan. It allows such schools to choose which reform initiatives to be implemented in order to improve their performance. There are also mandates that states enact updated AMOs for schools, graduation rate requirements, school improvement plans, state-level assessments in ELA and math, a focus on eliminating subgroup achievement gaps, a 95% participation rate on state assessments, and summative school rating systems (United States Department of Education, 2016). Within these summative school rating systems, this policy's distinction for low-performing schools holds strong parallels to the previously enacted Priority Schools distinction. Like Priority Schools under the ESEA Flexibility Waiver legislation, ESSA's *Comprehensive Support Schools* are those who fall among the bottom 5% of schools receiving Title I funds based on their summative rating. In addition, this distinction will also include high schools with less than a 67% graduation

rate, as well as schools that consistently produce low-performing subgroups, even after receiving additional support (United States Department of Education, 2016). Furthermore, the policy requires states to identify schools that have low-performing student subgroup populations. If these schools cannot improve upon this performance, they will be labeled as a comprehensive support and improvement school (United States Department of Education, 2016). Every school that has one of these distinctions is subject to the state-established sanctions or consequences for low-performance. Regardless of how states interpret this federal policy, the presence of sanctions as a behavioral measure to enforce school compliance and to foster improved student achievement are certain to remain, as they have for years.

Since the late 20th century, numerous federal educational accountability policies have been enacted in the United States. Each of these policies intended to change human behavior by enacting some form of consequence. Initially, these policies called for sanctions to be imposed onto schools that were out of assessment and performance reporting compliance. Then the focus of accountability shifted to student performance on the required assessments. Since the first policies that featured consequences for noncompliance or inadequate student achievement, the federal government has called for swifter and more stringent sanctions to be imposed on low-performing schools. Regardless of the focal point of accountability, a common thread found in these policies is the presence of sanctions leading up to school closure and the ultimate threat of joblessness for American teachers. For years, scare tactic sanctions such as these have served as the punisher that influences teachers to change their behavior. However, in order to find the specificity in how local schools experience these sanctions, it was necessary to explore a state's response to the educational accountability policies at the federal level.

Michigan's response to U.S. educational accountability policy as a form of behaviorism.

As a result of federal-level policies, each state has the responsibility of holding its districts and schools accountable for their performance. It is at the state level where the true specifications pertaining to education accountability policy sanctions are revealed. These sanctions serve as the punishers in the behaviorist/operant conditioning sense. Sanctions and consequences are embedded within these policies as a means of motivating educators to change their behavior in order to accelerate student achievement rates. Failure to do so results in these sanctions being imposed onto schools. In order to better contextualize this phenomenon, one state's responses to the federal level educational accountability policy over the past several decades will be reviewed. Since this study on the impact of educational accountability policy took place in the state of Michigan, the response of this state to policies at the federal level will be explored, as Michigan has demonstrated a similar trend of increasing the presence and intensity of educational accountability policies and sanctions, enacted as an intended form of behaviorism, onto its schools during this time.

Prior to the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), Michigan had already taken steps toward assessing the performance of its schools. As early as the 1970s, the state-mandated assessment, the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP), tested students on their ability to demonstrate competence with Michigan's Essential Goals and Objectives in mathematics and reading (United States Department of Education, 1996). In the 1990s, Michigan educational policy began to show signs of conforming to the higher level of accountability for improving the performance of its schools. Since then, the state has increased its use of assessments and student achievement data to identify low-performing schools that would receive accountability policy sanctions.

At first, the state responded by enacting reforms at the curricular level by emphasizing the need for academic learning standards in its schools. Also, the state was interested in knowing the progress of schools based on their performance on these standards. In 1990, this requirement began, when Public Act 25 was passed, and became Michigan's major education accountability policy from 1990 to 2002. This law called for the voluntary enactment of a state model core curriculum and public reporting of test scores. Public Act 25 of 1990 required annual education reports, including updates on each school's improvement plan (SIP), student achievement data from tests chosen by the school, retention and dropout rates, descriptions of specialized schools, enrollment process, and data on parent participation in student-teacher conferences. Under this law, schools were also required to report on the status of their accreditation and their curriculum as it compared to the state's curriculum. Finally, this law required schools to maintain their accredited status by complying with these guidelines. As a means of holding schools accountable for meeting these requirements, the policy imposed punitive measures onto schools for not maintaining this status, specifically onto schools that had been unaccredited for three consecutive years. These consequences included an option for parents to send their students to a school within the district that had maintained its accredited status, a requirement of implementing a research-based improvement model, as well as possible school closure (Public Act 25, 1990). While these reporting requirements were a step towards heightened accountability in schools, it was clear that more specific measures were needed to accelerate the progress of learning in Michigan's schools. Public Act 335 of 1993 sought to address this matter as it required districts to develop a core curriculum in mathematics, science, social studies and communication arts by the year 1997. This legislation forced local education agencies to change their behavior by adhering to these curricular expectations within the established timeline. A year

after this legislation had passed, the concerns pertaining to how the state's schools were to be funded were addressed. In 1994, the same year that *Goals 2000* and *IASA* were passed at the federal level, Proposal A was passed in Michigan. This legislation, which primarily focused on a more equitable funding structure for schools in the state, also brought about some added outcomes that indirectly impacted schools' accountability. For example, the state now allowed a "schools-of-choice system, which…freed children from ZIP code enforced school assignments, allowing them to attend a neighboring school district that has space" (LaFaive & McHugh, 2014). Additional pressure was imposed onto schools to perform, as parents now had options for moving their students to higher performing districts. The impact of this trend would result in less funding for the schools that lost students to other districts, and increased funding for those in receipt of those students. Furthermore, the state passed legislation allowing the opening and operation of public school academies, or charter schools, in 1994. After the charter school legislation became official in Michigan, the first eight charter schools in the state opened in 1994. After this added pressure to perform was imposed onto schools, the state's education policy turned back towards the standards movement. Continuing its response to *Goals 2000* and *IASA*, the Michigan Department of Education released its *Michigan Curriculum Framework* in 1996. This framework included a set of content standards for each of the core content areas. According to the Michigan Department of Education (1996), this framework was "a resource for helping Michigan's public and private schools design, implement, and assess their core content area curricula" (Michigan Department of Education, 1996, p. i). These content standards would also be reflected in the state's assessment, the MEAP. The goal of the *Michigan Curriculum Framework* was "to improve student achievement by aligning classroom instruction with core curriculum content standards and national content standards" (1996, p. ii). The fact that these

content standards were to be the primary emphasis on the state assessment served as a catalyst to again change the behavior of educators to make sure that these standards were not only present in their districts' curriculum, but a focal point of instruction in classrooms across the state. These content standards remained in place in the content areas of English Language Arts (ELA) and math for over fifteen years, for nearly twenty years in science, and remain as the state adopted curriculum standards for social studies today. These educational accountability policies remained intact in Michigan into the early years of the 21st century.

As the 1900s came to an end and the 2000s began, the nation's attention was again called to the seemingly failing educational system that was operating within the United States. When No Child Left Behind was passed into law in 2002, the state of Michigan implemented the various requirements embedded within it. This included the mandate of assuring that 100% of teachers and paraprofessionals in the school possessed highly qualified credentials, continuation of the mandatory state assessment, the MEAP, the 95% student participation rate on the MEAP, as well as the implementation of Adequate Yearly Progress, and sanctions for schools that did not achieve this distinction each year. In Michigan, schools that did not achieve their annual AYP goal for two or more consecutive years risked several increasingly severe consequences (Michigan Education Report: No Child Behind Law Demands "Adequate Yearly Progress" and Offers School Choice Options for Parents, November 17, 2002). Based on this expectation, schools and educators shifted their focus from merely striving to achieve school improvement plan goals, to making AYP, and avoiding the potential of these sanctions, which could culminate with school closure and job loss. ELA and math were the primary academic content areas that counted towards a schools' AYP status. Schools responded by narrowing the curriculum, spending more time on the content areas that counted towards AYP status on the state

assessment, and less time on those that didn't (Maleyko, 2011). While educators made these adjustments, state policies continued to shape the behavioral response of schools and those who worked within them. For example, the Michigan Merit Curriculum for high schools was enacted in 2006. This curriculum became eventually reflected in the required state assessment for high schools in Michigan, namely the Michigan Merit Exam (MME). Educational accountability policy in the state did not realize significant changes again until the 2010s.

After 8 years of NCLB implementation that had yielded less-than-desirable results, the pressure was again put onto states to intensify their sanctions on its lowest performing schools. Originally written into state law in 2009, Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c was amended in 2011. This legislation required officials at the state's department of education to publish a list identifying the state's "persistently lowest achieving" public schools. These schools were those among the lowest achieving five percent of all public schools in the state. Schools on this "persistently low achieving" list were required to submit a plan for redesign that follows selecting one of the four U.S. Department of Education federal intervention models: Transformation, Turnaround, Restart, or School Closure. This law also placed these schools under the indirect supervision of the State School Reform Office, which made the ultimate decision whether these schools' plans of implementing one of the aforementioned four models of redesign were approved, and whether schools made significant enough progress to be released from the status of "persistently lowest achieving" after a period of four school years. If they did not, the threat of closure again became the reality of these schools. Again, the threat of job loss and school closure through sanctions that dictated these interventions posed as the behaviorist environmental factor that sought to change the norms of practice for those who worked in this setting. In this same year, the state Michigan adopted the Common Core State Standards, with

an expected full implementation date of the 2013-2014 school year, which was later revised to the 2014-2015 school year. These new standards were expected to appear on state assessments beginning in the 2014-2015 school year as well.

Finally, regarding Michigan's response to Race to the Top, Michigan was not awarded with Race to the Top funds in any of the three phases of identification of states winning these funds which were announced between March of 2010 and December of 2011. The educational accountability policies of NCLB continued until 2012, when states were given a new option for educational accountability.

Since the state of Michigan has yet to enact a new policy that is aligned to ESSA, the educational accountability policy that is currently active in the state is Michigan's ESEA Flexibility Waiver. The waiver was originally approved by the U.S. Department of Education in 2012 and was renewed in 2015. The policy includes a federal modification to NCLB's 100% proficiency requirement, as it currently has a goal of 85% of the state's students proficient on state assessments by the year 2022. Similar to the preceding policies though, Michigan's ESEA Flexibility Waiver continues the trend of intensified accountability measures. The law calls for similar sanctions imposed onto the lowest performing 5% of schools in the state, though these schools are now called "Priority Schools." Additionally, Michigan imposes sanctions onto schools that demonstrate the greatest achievement gaps between their highest performing and lowest performing subgroups. These schools, identified as "Focus Schools," are also held accountable for developing and implementing mandatory reform initiatives to address these gaps. Furthermore, under this policy, Michigan publishes an annual top-to-bottom list of all public schools in the state, which compares each school to all other schools through a system of percentile rankings. Also, the state assessment requirement and 95% student participation rate

requirement both continue in this policy. However, in 2014, the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M–STEP) was introduced, replacing the state's 44-year-old MEAP test, and was aligned to Michigan. Also, this new state assessment has been publicized as more rigorous than its predecessor, the MEAP (Michigan Department of Education, December 21, 2015). The M-STEP is the primary state assessment that students in grades 3-8 take to inform policy action as dictated by the ESEA Flexibility Waiver of July 2015, the current educational accountability policy of the state. Similar to the MEAP though, the M-STEP provides data that contributes to the facets of the policy that include performance-based rewards or sanctions.

Under the approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver, Michigan schools must now compete to earn or retain incentives and avoid or rid themselves of consequences associated with the sanctions of the policy, as determined by a statewide top-to-bottom ranking of schools. This annual ranking of all schools in the state is based on their performance on the state assessments, rates of participation on these assessments, graduation rates, as well as completion of other required reporting measures. A school's ranking on this list determines whether it will receive accountability policy sanctions, as schools that perform among the bottom 5% of schools in the state are referred to as Priority Schools. These schools must either develop and implement a reform and redesign plan to accelerate student achievement outcomes and improve beyond the 5^{th} percentile of all schools in the state by 4 years, close and reopen as charter schools, or close permanently. Intensive consequences such as these are not desired by any school or district. In addition to its increased rigor, the M-STEP was designed and rolled out with the expectation that within its first three years of implementation, all students in the state would take this assessment online. This expectation differed from those during the days of the MEAP, which was essentially a paper/pencil assessment method. This meant that all public schools in the state had

to adjust to the intensifying technological competency expectations that were assumed all students had in order to take the M-STEP. Again, schools were forced to change the way they operate by not only preparing students for these new assessments, but also assuring that their students had the necessary technological competencies required to complete them. This expectation continued through the renewal of Michigan's ESEA Flexibility Waiver, which was approved in 2015, and remains intact today.

Under Michigan's approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver, schools are no longer named as Priority Schools or focus schools annually, rather such schools would be identified in three year cycles, beginning in 2017 (Michigan Department of Education, 2015). Despite this reprieve, efforts continue to be made to punish schools that struggle to make their way out of the lowest performing 5% of schools in the state.

In 2015, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder issued Michigan Executive Order No. 2015 – 9. This order brought about an unprecedented change in educational oversight in Michigan. Never before had the governor of the state had such a direct role in supervising any facet of education. Prior to this order, the State School Reform/Redesign Office and State School Reform District had been placed under the authority of the Michigan Department of Education. This executive order called for both to be moved to the state's Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (Mich. Exec. Order No. 2015 - 9 (Mar. 12, 2015, p. 4). Prior to this change, this office was supervised by the State Superintendent of Michigan's schools. During the time that the study was conducted, the director of the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget sat on the governor's cabinet. The oversight of the State School Reform/Redesign Office had essentially been taken from the Michigan Department of Education and given to an office that is indirectly supervised by the governor of Michigan. Since the

Governor's Executive Order, the State School Reform Office had imposed a higher level of involvement with the Priority Schools that its officials consider to be in need of further support. The Michigan State School Reform Office had since intensified its oversight of the lowest performing schools in the state, basing their intervention and involvement on the perception that the opportunity to improve Priority Schools had not been completely leveraged (*History of the SRO*, 2016). In order to address this evaluation, the State School Reform Office took advantage of the language of the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011, which gave this office the authority to assign a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to assume financial and academic leadership over schools/districts that have not met the expected growth during the 4-year Priority Schools' cohort. This sanction had been imposed onto the school district that served as the setting for this study. However, the school district requested and was granted two temporary restraining orders what prohibited the CEO to begin the work assigned by the State School Reform Office. Questioning the selection of its schools for this appointment among all of the Priority Schools in Michigan, the district filed a lawsuit against this action. The district sought to prevent the State School Reform Office, or its appointed CEO from taking over its Priority Schools. This school district's actions could be counted among the rare unanticipated and unintended behavioral responses to the State's educational accountability practices.

Amidst this turmoil, the State's approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver renewal of 2015 remains as Michigan's primary educational accountability policy imposed upon all public schools in the state until the completion of the 2017-2018 school year. This held true despite the enactment of ESSA into federal law in 2015. During this time, the state's policy response to ESSA was being developed, as the United States Department of Education was to "provide

ongoing guidance to support schools, districts, and States in the transition to the ESSA" (Whalen, 2015).

When seeking themes that exist among Michigan's educational accountability policies since 1990, several common threads stood out. First, the state consistently depended on implementing sanctions or consequences onto schools that failed to meet compliance requirements or overall performance expectations. These sanctions had been used as a means of convincing educators to change their current practices, and to embrace new school reform initiatives with the intent of accelerating student achievement. Those who had performed to the satisfaction of the state were spared of these consequences, and in some cases were rewarded for their efforts. At the same time, those on the cusp of being identified as a Priority School frantically fought to remain off the list of the state's lowest 5% of performing schools. Meanwhile, those who struggled to hit the academic target and fell into this category, continued to be punished, despite their best efforts. While Michigan's educational accountability policies demanded changes in behavior of educators for decades (e.g. curriculum content standards, changing state assessments, and school improvement or redesign plan development and implementation) what remained to be seen is how this state's current policy impacted the motivation and morale of teachers in its lowest performing schools.

Current educational accountability policy & teachers' motivation and morale.

This study was conducted in order to identify and describe the behaviorist elements of the educational accountability policy that was current in the State of Michigan at the time the study was conducted. The goal of the study was to uncover any changes in Priority School teachers' motivation and morale that took place when the policy's sanctions had been imposed as environmental factors on their schools. The assertion that behaviorist elements could be found

within the policy would be supported by any changes in these teachers' motivation and/or morale uncovered in the study. The literature showed how several educational accountability policies have changed educators' behavior by enacting systems of consequences and sanctions for low-performing schools. However, no literature on whether the amended Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c of 2011, the state's educational accountability policy at the time the study was conducted, led to an adverse, favorable or nonexistent behaviorist influence over teachers' motivation or morale. This study intended to fill that gap in the literature.

Methodological review – sections I and II.

Several research methods have been used to study the variables of accountability, motivation, and morale, as well as the interplay of these variables with each other. This section will report on the methodologies implemented by researchers on the key variables identified and defined in Section I of this chapter: accountability (independent variable), motivation (dependent variable), and morale (dependent variable). Also, this review will include a review of methods used by researchers who have studied the interplay between these variables, like Section II of this literature review. The objective of this methodological review was to further develop the research design of this study on accountability policy, motivation (specifically Expectancy Theory), and morale based on the methods that have been utilized within previous studies on these variables. The methodologies that have been utilized on research pertaining to Expectancy Theory will be investigated. The section will conclude with an analysis of the methodologies implemented to study the variable of morale. First though, the focus on methods used to study accountability will be reviewed.

Accountability policy was viewed as the independent variable in this study. When looking at the existing research on accountability, both quantitative and qualitative methods have

been implemented to arrive at various conclusions pertaining to this topic. Quantitative methods were implemented by Lee and Reeves (2012) to study the impact of school accountability under NCLB on student achievement outcomes in reading and math by analyzing student assessment data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The researchers used descriptive analyses and found various results in achievement outcomes in reading and math. The researchers established external validity due to the data set in which they used to conduct their study, which included the NAEP achievement data from all 50 states from 2000 to 2009. They were able to generalize that students improved their performance in math, while their performance in reading declined (Lee & Reeves, 2012). The use of such quantitative measures was suitable when using data collected from a large sample size. However, such measures would not necessarily support a study on the impact of accountability policy on Priority School teachers' motivation, and morale.

Also, Wagner and Hill (1996) used both qualitative and quantitative data analyses in a multi-site case study on the processes used to connect teacher evaluation (accountability) to professional learning and motivation. They conducted their study using both deductive and inductive reasoning methods on the results of a questionnaire administered to teachers, as well as information collected through a field study (Wagner & Hill, 1996). The deductive analysis component produced descriptive statistics on teachers' feelings about how their teaching performance was impacted by a model for teacher evaluation. The inductive component of the analysis required the researchers to categorize qualitative data. This data was collected through interviews, observations, and notes. Then the data was entered into a qualitative data management and analysis computer program. Regarding the validity of this study, the researcher established credibility, primarily through the researcher's use of triangulating the survey data,

interview data, observation data, and other supporting documents collected within the study (Wagner & Hill, 1996). The results of this study pointed to "critical elements within four major categories that influence the linking of teacher evaluation, professional growth, and motivation" (Wagner & Hill, 1996, p. iii), which were supported by the validity of its design.

The qualitative research methods to be deployed were suitable for this study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale. Specifically, the use of a questionnaire and interviews to collect qualitative data from teachers pertaining to their motivation and morale while working in low-performing Priority Schools with accountability policy sanctions imposed onto them would be logical and practical methods. It was also recommended that the researcher attempt to establish credibility as a measure of validity through a triangulation of data collected within this study.

Similar variety were found among the methods used in research to study the variable of motivation, and specifically expectancy, a key component of Vroom's Expectancy Theory. Since this is the most applicable motivation theory to a study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale, a methodological review of the studies on this theory is also appropriate.

In his quantitative study on the relationship of organizational variables and teacher motivation per Vroom's expectancy theory, Herrick (1973) used the results of a questionnaire completed by teachers to support his findings. Split-half reliability was utilized in this study. This practice consisted of dividing the study's test into two halves, scoring each separately, then comparing the two for correlation as a means of establishing internal consistency (Herrick, 1973). Reliability among the scales of each of the items on the questionnaire was achieved by using the index of internal consistency. Content validity was established by the researcher, who collected judgments on the content of the study through the literature, education administration

graduate students, education administration instructors, and teachers included in the sampling of the study (Herrick, 1973). This type of validity may not be ideal for a study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale in low-performing Priority Schools. Also, the nature of such a study, combined with the researcher's inability to access large volumes of population for sampling for this topic and disinterest in generalization suggest that developing and executing a quantitative study would be counterproductive. However, this study provides the researcher with additional support for the implementation of a questionnaire as a data collection instrument in this study.

Additionally, Kelley and Finnigan (2003) conducted a quantitative study on the organizational factors that impact teachers' expectancy using surveys administered to teachers. The researchers asked teachers about how likely they thought accountability policy goals could be attained in their schools if they gave the highest level of effort possible (Kelley & Finnigan, 2003). In this study, expectancy was the dependent variable. Independent variables included teacher characteristics and teacher attitudes, as well as the organizational context of the school and its demographics. Hierarchical linear modeling was used to "examine the effects of organizational contexts on group-level behaviors by estimating the coefficients for each level" (Kelley & Finnigan, 2003, p. 614). Using this approach on data from two surveys, the researchers found that teachers working in schools with high-stakes accountability programs perceived that the fairness of high-stakes accountability programs influence and can reflect their expectancy (Kelley & Finnigan, 2003). Within this study, the researchers established construct validity, as they produced correlation coefficients between variables that were studied at the teacher level. Later, they made recommendations in the generalized sense to policy makers and administrators who are responsible for designing and implementing accountability programs.

This validity was upheld, as the researchers were able to demonstrate similar findings in different environments with different organizational contexts (Kelley & Finnigan, 2003), demonstrating test-retest reliability. The value that this finding brings to this study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale can be found in the methods the researchers used to collect data on teachers' attitudes towards an accountability program, as well as organizational context items. Furthermore, this study included a question on its surveys that pertained directly to the participants' (teachers') expectancy that their school would meet their school's goals. This question asked for teachers to provide their perception in the form of percentage-based probability of how likely their school would meet its goals if they gave their highest level of effort they were able to all year long (Kelley & Finnigan, 2003). Whereas the use of a survey may not be the best fit for this study, the design of a question such as this may provide a legitimate influence on the questions asked of participants in this study.

Also, in their study, Miskel, McDonald, and Bloom (1983) used sequential exploratory mixed-methods research to determine the effects of structural and expectancy links on school effectiveness indicators. Qualitative data was collected first. This data informed the development of the quantitative data collection instruments. Qualitative data was collected through teacher interviews, while scaled-response questions were used as the instruments for collecting quantitative data from teachers. The study suggested external validity when investigating the relationship of structural and expectancy links on school effectiveness indicators. In the general sense, Miskel, McDonald, and Bloom (1983) suggested that strong relationships between school staff members would yield greater perceived effectiveness of those schools. The study used multiple regression techniques to find a significant relationship between expectancy motivation and student achievement and teacher attitudes. For the most part, these

significant relationships intensified as the school year progressed (Miskel, et al., 1983). As was the case in this study, the use of teacher interviews proved to be an equally effective means of collecting data in this study as the use of a questionnaire.

Finally, qualitative methods were utilized by Finnigan (2005) in her study on whether principal leadership influences teacher expectancy in low-performing schools, as well as teachers' motivational and morale responses to their schools being placed onto probation. The data that was used in this study was derived using qualitative data from a previously conducted parallel mixed-methods study, which included interviews with staff members from three probationary schools in Chicago. The analysis involved in the study included a review of interview transcripts from these schools. Qualitative methods for analyzing this data included the use of a coding scheme which had some differences across schools (Finnigan, 2005). Finnigan (2005) argued for the suitability of the design and methodology of the study in answering the research question posed within it. Within her study, Finnigan established confirmability when she stated that her findings pertaining to the characteristics of principals that influence teachers "support the work of Leithwood, Tomlinson, and Genge (1996)", who had established similar characteristic descriptions through their work. This study also found that teachers in all three schools reported low morale and motivation after their schools were placed onto probationary status. The researcher was unclear as to whether the probation policy was the primary factor contributing to these morale and motivation levels (Finnigan, 2005), suggesting a lack of generalizability within the study when investigating the interplay between these variables. The study featured in *this* work did not seek to obtain generalizability. However, the use of coding practices on interview or focus group transcripts was viewed as when the study was in its developmental phases.

When the focus of the methodological review turned to studies conducted on morale, again a variety of methods were found to have been implemented by researchers who have studied this topic. Several studies reviewed in this section include methods that would support the research design of this study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale.

Using a teacher survey as a pre- and post-test, along with teacher interviews, Blomquist, (1986) conducted a mixed-methods case study on the impact of organizational changes on staff members' morale. They collected their data from staff members at a single junior high school in an urban setting. The researchers established credibility by using their literature review and survey data to make recommendations for addressing current practices in schools when considering teachers' morale. Seeking construct validity between these variables, the researchers produced the relevant finding that organizational change did not produce a significant change in the level of teacher morale from one year to the next (Blomquist, 1986). The researchers used a t-test on the survey sub-scales that focused on emotional exhaustion, finding no differences in teacher responses in terms of their feeling emotionally drained, suggesting test-retest reliability between the pre-test and the post-test data collection. The interviews conducted in addition to the survey resulted in greater validity of this study. Since this is the goal of this study, integrating a survey or questionnaire protocol along with an interview protocol should result in similar validity.

Also, in a qualitative case study, Evans (1997) sought to determine the factors that influence employee's work-related attitudes (morale). The researcher conducted the study in one primary school in a low-income town in England. Using informational observations of teachers and of daily school operations, as well as teacher interviews, post-interview questionnaires and follow-up interviews, the researcher concluded that changes in instructional practices

significantly damage the morale of staff members, and that the effectiveness of educational changes are reduced when morale is reduced (Evans, 1997). The researcher established confirmability within her study, as her "conclusions were verified by a wide range of teachers who had not acted as interviewees" (Evans, 1997, p. 835). Again, the use of questionnaires and interviews proved to be viable instruments for conducting a qualitative case study when morale is a key variable.

Furthermore, Covington (2010) conducted a descriptive quantitative study that investigated the presence of a relationship between teacher morale and student achievement by using student achievement results from an assessment, a nominal scale questionnaire, an interval scale assessment, and a closed-ended interview with 30 teachers who participated in the study. Although this study used both descriptive qualitative and quantitative data, it was considered a quantitative study. Teacher morale was viewed as the independent variable, while student assessment scores on a Criterion Referenced Competency Test were used as the dependent variable in this study. One of the study's limitations was found to be that the design of the study could not imply causality, or construct validity (Covington, 2010). The instruments used in the study replicated those used in previous studies, suggesting qualities of external validity, while the student assessment established content validity. The reliability of the instruments used in this study was established using internal consistency measures, which were applied in other studies that used similar instruments. This study produced two findings that were relevant to this study. Covington (2010) found that there is no correlation between teacher morale and students' achievement on tests, and that working conditions and decision-making processes are factors that influence teachers' morale. The planned use of a questionnaire in this study supported the

replication of this instrumentation method in this study on accountability, motivation, and morale.

Finally, in their quantitative case study on identifying the sources of teachers' stress, Miller, Brown-Anderson, Fleming, Peele and Chen (1999) utilized a survey called the Teacher Stress Inventory and used a Likert scale in this survey to collect their data from 60 teacher respondents. This instrument was used to establish test-retest reliability. Respondents' data extracted from the instrument produced a series of positive and negative correlations between varying factors and participants' stress levels. Findings from the study showed that in teachers, stress is correlated to disruptions to instructional time, methods used for curriculum change, and other factors (Miller et al., 1999). While it is not the goal of the researcher to establish a heavy influence of quantitative methods, it may be useful to include Likert scale questions on a questionnaire or interview within a proposed study on accountability, motivation, and morale.

The methods utilized in the studies above contributed to the consideration of a methodology for this study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale. Several recurring themes can be extracted from these studies to aid in shaping this study on accountability policy, motivation, and morale. For example, studies that involved both qualitative and/or quantitative data collection methods were recurring theme. The use of Likert-type scale questions appears to be the strongest option for integrating quantitative instrumentation methods into this study. Also, the used of qualitative methods such as interviews and questionnaires was a common theme and influenced the design of this study.

The use of multiple types of evidence is needed within a case study (Yin, 1984). The recurrence of case studies in this review suggested this to be an appropriate direction for this study. This study initially intended to incorporate the use of both a questionnaire and teacher

interview to support its findings. Case study was the initial research strategy identified for this study. However, as the study was being conducted, a significant limitation had occurred when its questionnaire malfunctioned. This led to the collection of insufficient data from this instrument, leaving the teacher interview data as the sole source of evidence supporting the findings of this study. This limitation resulted in an inability to triangulate data from multiple evidence sources to inform the study's findings. Subsequently, the study's design was modified. The initial case study design had evolved into a qualitative descriptive study plan. From that point on, the study was carried out as a qualitative descriptive study. Descriptive research "is more concerned with what, rather than how or why something has happened" (Nassaji, 2015, p. 129). Each of the studies reviewed asked exploratory research questions seeking answers to "what" had taken place. This study set out to do the same. The studies reviewed in this chapter demonstrated validity and reliability, respectively. Such accomplishments were also sought for this study. Finally, none of the studies reviewed in this section sought to use the data collected and subsequent findings in order to make wide-ranging generalizations to be applied outside of the setting in which they were conducted. The researcher also sought to collect data from accessible locations to inform answers to the research questions described above, with the intention of applying the findings and interpretations of the study in the context of the study's setting only. Furthermore, the researcher sought to establish validity criteria such as credibility, confirmability and dependability. Many of the studies reviewed in this section established credibility. While some of the other types of validity listed were present in individual studies reviewed, the presence of all of them in all studies reviewed did not occur as a common theme. Since this study involved a small sample of teachers from two schools, it could not be assumed that the methods and findings of this study would produce external generalizability. Similar

research methods were deployed to measure both motivation and morale. The methods utilized in the study featured the use of a semi-structured interview protocol only. This study on accountability, motivation, and morale took the form of a qualitative descriptive study. A description of this study's inclusion of various qualitative descriptive study principles can be found in the next chapter of this work.

Chapter Summary

The identification of several key terms and theories was necessary prior to conducting a qualitative descriptive study on the impact of current educational accountability policy on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. These terms and theories included behaviorism, motivation, morale, and accountability. The theories associated with this study included Law of Effect, Operant Conditioning and the Expectancy Theory. The existing research on these key terms and theories revealed established interplay between them.

Educational accountability policy has evolved at the federal and state level for several decades. Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c was the current educational accountability policy in place in the State of Michigan when this study was conducted. This policy contained unique sanctions for Michigan's Priority Schools which included state-level intervention at the most intensive level. Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c served as the study's focal point policy. Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c, along with each of the key terms and theories contributed to the development of a conceptual framework for this study. This framework is revealed in the subsequent chapter. This framework provided the operational basis for the study's design.

Two research methods were planned for the study's data collection, but one malfunctioned. The inability to utilize the data collected from the study's questionnaire eliminated the possibility of collecting multiple evidence sources. Also, the data collected from

the teacher interviews could no longer be triangulated with the data from another source. Since this was the case, the plan for this study changed from a case study design to a qualitative descriptive study design. The study sought to attain various measures of validity and reliability. The study's measures of validity included credibility, confirmability, and dependability.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology of a qualitative descriptive study that endeavored to determine if and how Michigan's current educational accountability policy contains behaviorist elements that impact the instructional staff's motivation and morale in two distinct schools of a southeastern Michigan public school district. This chapter will contextualize the problem of interest at the core of this study. This problem pertains to the motivation and morale of teachers working in Priority Schools that have had current educational accountability policy sanctions imposed onto them. The chapter's second intent is to reveal a detailed research plan for confirming the phenomenon of these adverse behavioral effects of the Michigan's accountability.

Given the chapter's overall purpose, several objectives are sought to be accomplished. The first objective of this chapter is to revisit the study's problem statement. The circumstances described in this section contribute to the inspiration for engaging in a study on current educational accountability policy, teacher motivation, and teacher morale. The next major objective of this chapter is to present the five research questions that have been developed as a means of addressing the problem through this study. Educational accountability policy, motivation, morale, and the major components of the Expectancy Theory of Motivation are reflected within this set of questions. The next chapter objective is to provide an overview of five qualitative descriptive study principles that served as the basis for the research design for this study. Adding a degree of specificity, the chapter explains how a qualitative descriptive study strategy is to be implemented and describes in detail the study's research design. This design culminated with a conceptual framework that is comprised of an interrelated set of seven lenses by which the study was to be conducted. Each of these lenses was inspired by a specific

foundational element of the study's design. The following chapter objective is to describe the two research techniques that were planned as the study's methods. Presenting the plan for collecting data within the study is the next chapter objective. This section will lead into the culminating objective of this chapter. The final objective of this chapter is to discuss the plan for analyzing the data collected within the study. This required the use of varying analysis strategies for the data collected from each of the study's two proposed instruments. This section will also include a plan for establishing various measures of validity within the study, as well as a description of the study's intended audience.

Problem statement

National reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) pointed to the fact that the United States was being outperformed and surpassed academically by many other nations. Since that time, both the federal and state-level governments have engaged in a relentless mission to hold educators accountable for their performance based on the academic achievement of their students. The presence of accountability, which has come by way of various federal and state-level educational accountability policies and the sanctions embedded within them, have served as the primary driving force to do so. These sanctions have been developed to create an environment that changes the behaviors of educators in schools that are identified as low-performing (or priority) schools. These schools are typically perceived as not functioning properly, being ineffective at educating the students that are serviced within them. The primary behaviors targeted for reform by such sanctions emphasize on how teaching and learning take place within these schools. The idea behind this is that past instructional practices led to these schools underperforming. The application of pressure through accountability policy sanctions would condition educators to

change these behaviors. This process would then lead to improved academic achievement rates by students within the schools, thus answering the call for improved United States educational outcomes.

Educational accountability policies are in place to improve the performance of all schools. These policies change educators' behaviors that impact how teaching and learning are planned and implemented. However, these are only a few behaviors that are subject to being impacted by educational accountability policy. How such policies impact additional behaviors, specifically teachers' motivation and morale, are of interest within this study. It is apparent that when teachers' motivation and morale levels are high, their effort and productivity levels are also high.

It is reasonable to assume that employers seek highly motivated employees who can contribute to the success of the organization. This would be because motivation has a significant effect on productivity (Valencia, 2005). Employee motivation is viewed as a critical component to a high-performing organization. The same is true of school organizations. School leaders, such as the study's researcher, seek highly motivated people to hire and aspire to maintain employees' drive to meet and exceed the school's performance goals. The key in keeping employees, including teachers, highly motivated to accomplish these goals is to understand how motivation occurs within them. For high levels of teacher motivation to be achieved, teachers must possess high levels of expectancy, valence, and instrumentality. When teachers believe that putting forth a high level of effort will result in high performance, their expectancy is high. When teachers believe that this effort will result in the achievement of the goal, their instrumentality is high. Finally, when teachers place a high importance on the expected outcome or goal, they possess high valence. The teacher who possesses high levels of all three of these

motivational components will likely possess high levels of motivation as well. But when additional environmental factors such as current educational accountability policy sanctions are present, it is possible that the process of producing high levels of teacher motivation can be compromised, resulting in reduced or low levels of motivation. If this is true, it could be presumed that current educational accountability policy may indirectly impact the ability of low-performing Priority Schools to make the educational achievement improvements required by such policy in a negative manner. The same might be said of the impact of such policy on teachers' morale.

Whereas motivation is suggestive of the effort one might give to the organization, morale speaks to the individual's attitudes or feelings toward their workplace. In the context of the low-performing Priority School with educational accountability policy sanctions imposed upon it, teachers who work within these schools have many additional challenges that might impact their feelings about their workplace. For example, they work in a Priority School that has been labeled as such due to the high volume of low student achievement that is present within the school. Since the primary objective of teaching is to improve student achievement outcomes, it is understandable that teachers' feelings toward the school may become more negative when the school struggles to accomplish this objective. Also, teachers within these schools receive a message from educational accountability policy sanctions that the hard work in which they have engaged for years was somehow "wrong" or "not good enough." When people work hard and do what they think is right for students, only to be told that their efforts aren't good enough, this can also lead to emotions of frustration, confusion, and fear. Such emotions can also contribute to the attitudes of teachers toward their workplaces declining. In the context of the low-performing, or Priority School, educational accountability policy sanctions will likely require such a school to

reform its approaches of providing instruction to students. Instructional reform initiatives are typically suggestive of a restart of sorts, which can be very overwhelming for those who have engaged in the work of teaching and learning following a familiar approach for years. When teachers are forced to change their way of working, which is inclusive of all the previous professional learning, practice, coaching, and evaluative support they have received along the way, it is reasonable to presume that this would negatively impact their overall emotional state or feelings toward the school. The potential for this phenomenon is troubling, especially in the setting of the low-performing school. Low morale such as this may be counterproductive to the underlying philosophy and goal of such policies, thus setting up the impacted schools for failure. If high levels of teacher morale contribute to the overall success of a school, such a phenomenon might suggest that schools that are identified as low-performing Priority Schools face far worse odds of making the improvements required by educational accountability policies than initially anticipated.

The problem is that the sanctions imposed onto schools that are identified as low-performing or Priority Schools according to the current educational accountability policy put additional pressure onto teachers who work within such schools to make more substantial improvements in students' academic achievement rates at a faster rate than those schools that are not considered to be Priority Schools. If these schools do not improve to the satisfaction of the government agency in charge of monitoring their progress within the established timeline, consequences as severe as school closure may be enacted. While educational accountability policy can be viewed as a means of changing teaching and learning behaviors in a school, the behaviors of teachers' motivation and morale should also be taken into consideration. What is of

interest to the researcher is the impact of current educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale.

Research questions

Motivation and morale are important factors to consider when studying the behavioral response of teachers who work in low-performing Priority Schools with educational accountability sanctions imposed onto them. Given the research concern, this qualitative descriptive study sought to investigate the phenomenon of how Michigan's accountability policy has inherent behaviorist elements that affect teacher motivation and morale in two selected schools in a Michigan public school district. Conducting this study required the researcher to raise several research questions that support the study's conceptual framework and design. These research questions included:

1. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' motivation in low-performing Priority Schools?***

2. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' expectancy related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School?***

3. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' valence related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School?***

4. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' instrumentality related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School?***

5. ***How do current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' morale in low-performing schools?***

Qualitative descriptive study principles

The previous chapter pointed out that this study took the form of a qualitative descriptive study. The study set out to uncover the kind of impact current educational accountability policy sanctions had on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. Prior to carrying out the study, it was important to recognize the principles of this type research. When reviewing the research on the topic, several overarching principles were recognized and associated with qualitative descriptive study research. Since qualitative descriptive studies should describe an event based on a conceptual framework (Sandelowski, 2000), it was imperative to identify such principles in order to assure their presence in this study's conceptual framework. In all, five principles of qualitative descriptive study were uncovered.

Principle #1: data from natural setting

Qualitative descriptive study data are collected within the phenomenon's natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Nassaji, 2015). Within such a study, exploratory inquiries are investigated where the study's identified phenomenon exists. The intent of this study was to explore inquiries pertaining to the impact of a current educational accountability policy and its sanctions on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. Adhering to this qualitative descriptive study principle, the study's data collection took place inside of each participating teacher's school.

Principle #2: interview data, focus group data or observation data

In general, qualitative data are collected in the form of words (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Elliot & Timulak, 2005). Various data collection strategies and instruments may be used to collect this type of data in a qualitative descriptive study. Interviews, focus groups or observations are among the more common data collection techniques in such studies (Lambert &

Lambert, 2012; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). This study featured the use of interview data to support its findings. Qualitative descriptive interviews typically feature various open-ended questions for participants to answer (Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). The goal of designing such questions is to prompt participants to provide detailed responses based on their experiences of the identified phenomenon while in the natural setting. In addition, qualitative descriptive interviews may be semi-structured (Elliot & Timulak, 2005; Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; Sandelowski, 2000). A semi-structured interview allows the facilitator to ask any necessary follow-up questions of participants after responding an initial interview question. Like the inclusion of open-ended questions in the qualitative descriptive study interview, use of this strategy encourages a qualitative descriptive study's participants to be clear and elaborative when sharing their experiences. Finally, the data collected from interviews are typically recorded digitally (Elliot & Timulak, 2005; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). The process of recording each interview supports the process of their transcription, followed by the analysis of the data collected in this process.

Principle #3: purposeful sampling

Purposeful sampling techniques are common in qualitative descriptive studies (Elliot & Timulak, 2005; Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Sandelowski, 2000). Researchers conducting such studies develop specialized set of criteria for people to qualify to take part in their work. There is a distinct purpose behind the participant selection criteria. Qualitative descriptive study participants must " have experienced the phenomenon identified for the study; they must be able to communicate with the researcher; and they are willing to tell their stories" (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009, p. 299). With these expectations in place, qualitative descriptive researchers customize the criteria to fit various aspects of the study's purpose

(Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The selection criteria for the participants of this study were customized in order to determine the impact of current educational accountability policy sanctions on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. Purposeful sampling was evident in this study. Clear and consistent participant criteria were developed and applied when determining those who would be invited to take part in it. These criteria are described in full detail in the next chapter of this work.

Principle #4: thematic analysis

Another qualitative descriptive study principle pertains to how data are analyzed after collection. Since qualitative descriptive studies often collect verbal data from participants, it is essential to have an organized approach to working with the data in order to identify and support the study's findings. In order to accomplish such organization, qualitative descriptive studies include the systematic use of coding, or categorizing data (Elliot & Timulak, 205; Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). Once the data collected from the study has been coded, the codes are then categorized. The categorized codes then contribute to overarching themes (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Nassaji, 2015). The themes unearthed from the study support the findings that summarize the lived experience of the phenomenon, as conveyed by the study's participants (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Nassaji, 2015). This study followed a similar data analysis plan. Coded data led to the development of overarching themes, which were interpreted to provide findings to the study's five research questions.

Principle #5: straightforward reporting of findings

The fifth and final principle of qualitative descriptive studies concerns the researcher's provision of clear and concise findings. This process is supported by each preceding principle. Qualitative descriptive studies are expected to provide straightforward findings (Kim, Sefcik &

Bradway, 2017; Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). These findings should clearly answer the study's research questions. In doing so, the straightforward findings result in a clear description of the phenomenon, as experienced by the study's participants (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Sandelowski, 2000). This proved to do exactly that. The interview data that was collected and analyzed directly supported the straightforward findings of each of the study's five research questions. This process resulted in a clear description of the impact of current educational accountability policy on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. This description is presented within the final two chapters of this work.

Research Design

This study followed qualitative descriptive study principles. Within this study's design, teachers from two schools in the same school district, whose schools' Priority School status differed, were identified as the key informants of the study. These criteria included having worked in their school before and during Priority School status. In the case of the elementary school, this also included those who were still employed in the school after coming out of Priority School status. In all, six teachers from the elementary school and 11 teachers from the middle school met the criteria for participation. However, not all who were invited to take part in the study chose to do so. A qualitative descriptive study design was enacted as similar methods were to be deployed in both settings, for the purpose of comparing the data collected from them. The objective of the study was to seek answers to the aforementioned research questions as a means of determining whether teachers perceived that sanctions imposed onto Priority Schools through current educational accountability policy, specifically those embedded

within Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c, impacted their motivation and morale. Various propositions exist within the research questions that were posed within this study.

The first four research questions within this study focused on a potential connection between current educational accountability policy and motivation, as studied through the lens of Expectancy Theory. For example, Research Question 1 sought to establish a connection between teachers' motivation and the sanctions imposed onto Priority Schools by current educational accountability policy. Research Questions 2-4 had to be investigated before the researcher could arrive at a complete answer to Research Question 1. These questions proposed a similar connection between current educational accountability policy sanctions and motivation, though specifically to each of the three key elements of Expectancy Theory: expectancy (Research Question 2), valence (Research Question 3), and instrumentality (Research Question 4). After answers to Research Questions 2-4 were unearthed, the supporting evidence needed to provide a straightforward answer Research Question 1 was available. This process followed the lens of *Figure 2*, which was presented in the Literature Review chapter. Following such a plan left only a research question focused on the impact of current educational accountability policy on teachers' morale to answer.

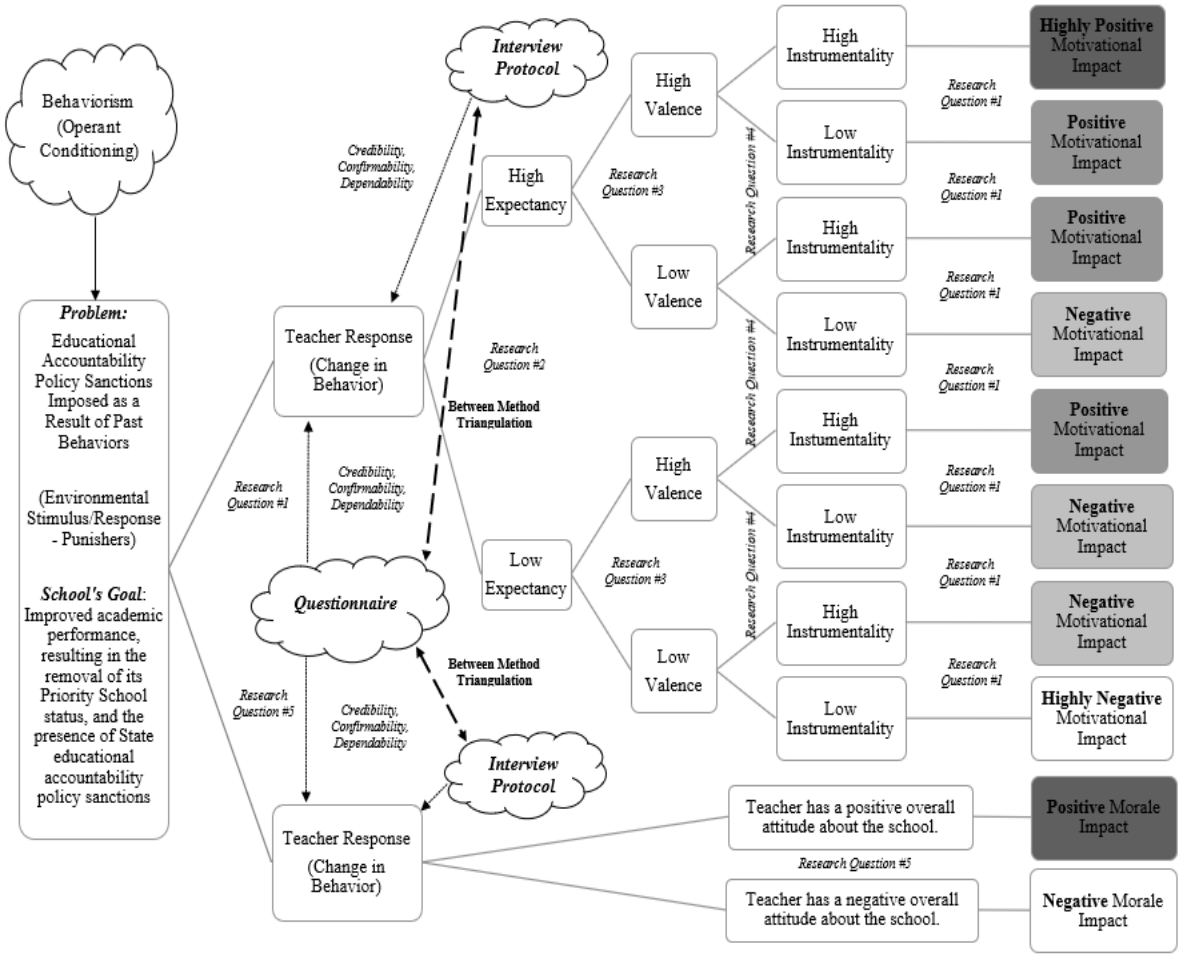
Research Question 5 held the objective of determining whether a connection exists between current educational accountability policy sanctions and Priority School teachers' morale. Specifically, the researcher seeks to establish whether teachers in the two aforementioned school settings had positive or negative overall attitudes about their school, and the school's goal of eliminating its low-performing (Priority School) status (in one school), or continuing to keep it out of Priority School status (in the other school). These questions, along

with several other key components found in this chapter, contributed to the study's conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study on the topic of the perceived impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale was comprised of several lenses. These lenses included behaviorism, the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, morale, as well as the study's problem statement, research questions, data sources as well as validity measures. The integration of these lenses is depicted in *Figure 5*.

Figure 5. Conceptual Framework: Impact of Educational Accountability Policy on Teacher Motivation and Morale



Against the backdrop of this visual depiction of the study's conceptual framework, each lens of the conceptual framework is described in the subsequent section. The individual sections, then, disclose how the lenses are interwoven to conceptualize the study's methodological framework. The description of these lenses do not suggest a constant framework that cannot be adjusted once formal inquiry and analysis occur in the study's context; conversely, a fluid methodological approach, which would include adjustments to the conceptual framework as its research instruments were used to establish and confirm an understanding of the setting's phenomenon concerning the state accountability policy's influence on teacher motivation and morale in the two schools identified for the study (Ravitch and Riggan, 2017).

The lens of behaviorism.

Looking through the lens of behaviorism on this study, the researcher suggested that the sanctions embedded within Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c that were imposed onto participating teachers' schools, served as the existing environmental factors. Teachers' motivation and morale played the role of the human behaviors or responses. What remained to be seen is if this current educational accountability policy would impact the motivation and morale of teachers within these two settings. If an impact were uncovered, it would be safe to consider the interplay between the policy and teachers' motivation and morale as a form of behaviorism. Furthermore, applying the theory of Operant Conditioning to this lens would suggest that the policy's sanctions serve as the tactic driving teachers to certain levels of motivation and morale. It is through this lens that the foundational question of whether current educational accountability policy impacts teachers' motivation and morale was to be examined.

The lens of the expectancy theory of motivation.

Also included in this study's conceptual framework is the Expectancy Theory of motivation. This theory suggests that motivation occurs in humans when they possess high expectancy, valence, and instrumentality. Each of these Expectancy Theory factors were included within the conceptual framework of this study and were reflected within the research design. Within the interview protocol, questions posed to participating teacher informants asked them to describe their level of expectancy, valence, and instrumentality as related to the goal of making the necessary improvements in their school's overall performance. When the instrument's questions were asked of the middle school teachers, they were in the context of a school that still had the Priority School label. In terms of the elementary teachers' interview questions regarding expectancy, valence, and instrumentality, they were posed in the past tense, reflecting when their school was considered a Priority School. The data collected from each of these three interview questions will suggest a positive or negative impact on each of these foundational elements of Expectancy Theory. Combining the levels of each participating teacher informant within each school setting produced the impact on their expectancy, valence, and instrumentality. These impacts were then compared against those collected from the other school and were used to answer Research Questions 2-4.

Teacher informants provided data that pointed to their positive or negative impacts on their expectancy, valence, and instrumentality. This was determined based on how teacher informants responded to interview questions 3, 4, and 5. After a positive or negative impact was established for the teacher's expectancy, valence, and instrumentality from each school, these ratings were combined to establish each of their overall motivational impact of "Highly Positive," "Positive," "Negative," or "Highly Negative."

The lens of Expectancy Theory suggests that when expectancy, valence, and instrumentality are high, high motivation is the result. On the other hand, low motivation is the result when teachers have low levels of expectancy, valence, and instrumentality.

The lens of morale.

The key concept of morale was also included as a lens of this study's conceptual framework. Like the lens of behaviorism, the current educational accountability policy sanctions imposed onto low-performing schools served as the featured environmental factor within this study. What was also of interest to the researcher is whether teachers within these schools changed their behavior in the presence of this environmental factor due to a change in their morale. The primary objective of these schools was to improve academic performance. Demonstrating enough improvement would result in the elimination of the Priority School label, and the policy sanctions that accompany such a label. Within these conditions, the teachers experienced a positive or negative impact to their overall morale about the school and its goal. Questions 6-8 of the interview protocol generated the data needed from the participating teacher informants to make the determination of whether the presence of current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' morale.

The lens of the study's problem statement.

Earlier in this chapter, the study's problem statement was established. This statement also had a direct influence over the conceptual framework of this study. Teachers who worked in Priority Schools had additional pressure (per the sanctions embedded within the current educational accountability policy) to make rapid improvements in the overall performance of the school. This being the case, it was reasonable to consider how teachers' motivation and morale would be impacted when this environmental factor is present. Looking through the lens of the

problem statement, it was the researcher's ambition to establish findings that can inform future educational accountability policies enacted in the State of Michigan, as a means of reducing this added pressure from sanctions, and any undesirable reactions or changes in teachers' behavior, such as a potential negative impact on their motivation and morale.

The lens of the study's research questions.

The research questions posed within this study not only influenced the research design, but the conceptual framework, as well. As was previously pointed out in the research design section, the five research questions posed within this study were to be answered by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data collected from the study's questionnaire and interview protocol. The questions included an emphasis on general motivation and morale levels of participating teacher informants. This emphasis was combined with a more detailed study of the foundational elements of Expectancy Theory and were reflected through various aspects of the questionnaire and interview protocol. Since both instruments sought to produce answers to a common research question, such as Research Questions 1 and 5, the data collected from these instruments was to be triangulated to strengthen the subsequent findings related to the research question. Whereas the findings of the current educational accountability policy's potential positive or negative impact on teachers' motivation and morale would make for more compelling findings, the researcher was also prepared to accept a finding of no impact of such policy on teachers' motivation and morale.

The lens of the study's data sources and data collection processes.

This study deployed two separate instruments for collecting data from participating teacher informants. The first instrument, the questionnaire (see Appendix B), was to collect preliminary data to be used in order to answer Research Questions 1 and 5 of the study. This

data was to be combined with data collected from the second instrument in order to develop as comprehensive of findings regarding these questions as possible.

The second instrument, an interview protocol (see Appendix B), addressed all five of the study's research questions. The qualitative data collected within these interviews was be coded and themed. The themes derived from this data supported the findings for each respective research question. The implementation of these tools contributed to the study's research techniques.

Research Techniques

First, the researcher planned to collect evidence through the use a cross-sectional and semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was to require informants to identify their gender, their school's Priority School status ("P-Priority School or "R-Released from Priority School List"), and the number of years they have worked in the school. The questionnaire then provided a predetermined set of work-related aspects that might impact their motivation and morale. These aspects were derived from the existing literature on this topic, from the language of Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c, and from the personal experiences of the researcher, who has worked in Priority School settings for several years. The informants were also to be asked to identify whether each aspect associated with their work impacts their motivation or morale in a positive or negative manner. Finally, the questionnaire was to require informants to use an ordinal scale to identify the intensity by which each work-related aspect impacts their motivation or morale in the identified positive or negative nature. The objective of using this instrument was to determine whether current educational accountability policy has an impact on the motivation and morale of teachers who work in a Priority School, as well as of those who work in a school that was recently released from Priority School status. In addition,

the data collected from this instrument was intended to support the selection of a purposeful sample of teacher informants for the subsequent interview protocol.

As a second source of evidence, the researcher used a semi-structured, key informant interview protocol (see Appendix B). This interview protocol included questions about how the presence of current educational accountability sanctions impacts teachers' expectancy, valence, instrumentality, and morale. Assuming that the informants were not familiar with Expectancy Theory, or this study's definition of morale, the researcher designed questions that included the definitions of these key concepts in order to collect data that can be considered both valid and accurate.

The use of these two data collection methods were to support a between-method triangulation of data, by using multiple sources of evidence. Furthermore, data collected from both instruments were to be compared within and across the two settings identified within this study as a means of increasing the credibility and validity of such a study, as suggested by Yeasmin and Rahman (2012). These methods required the development and implementation of a clear data collection plan.

Data Collection Sources and Techniques

The data to be collected in this study was to include qualitative instruments. Both instruments were to collect categorical data. The units of analysis within this study were the motivation and morale of teachers who worked in an elementary school and a middle school in the same district. The elementary school began the most recent school year on Michigan's Priority Schools List, though was removed from the list in January of the same school year. The middle school had remained on this list and continued to be monitored by the State School Reform Office. This monitoring continued until the school implemented a formal restructuring

by changing its name, building code, instructional program and grade levels serviced within it, resulting in the eventual elimination of its status as a Priority School.

As was previously mentioned, the qualitative data from these settings was to be collected using a questionnaire and an interview protocol. The researcher targeted teachers who worked in both settings before, during, (and in the case of one of the two schools) and after their school was identified as a Priority School and had sanctions imposed onto it, per Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c. The plan included the purposeful sampling of teachers who met these criteria in both schools. Those teachers selected to participate as informants of this study were asked to first complete the questionnaire as a means of providing some form of indication as to whether current educational accountability policy impacted their motivation and morale, and to what degree. Once these questionnaires were completed and collected, the researcher coordinated and executed interviews with a purposeful sample of teachers within this population from both school settings. The data collected from the questionnaire (along with the data collected from the interview protocol) was to contribute to answering Research Questions 1 and 5.

The interview protocol that was developed and implemented in this study consisted of several questions that were asked by the researcher's colleagues to each teacher informant participating in the study who completed a questionnaire. Each question included in the interview protocol held a distinct influence of one of several of the key concepts associated with this study: behaviorism, motivation, expectancy, valence, instrumentality, and morale. For example, the first two questions to be included in the interview protocol reflected the behaviorist aspect of the study's conceptual framework. These questions were designed to determine whether the presence of accountability policy sanctions changed teachers' behaviors of motivation and morale. The interview protocol then moved onto questions that addressed the

Expectancy Theory elements. By asking these questions, the researcher sought to gain qualitative data from informants that revealed how the presence of educational accountability policy sanctions impacted the key factors associated with this theory, which included teachers' expectancy, instrumentation, and valence. The interview protocol concluded with three questions that focused on uncovering the impact of the policy's sanctions onto teacher informants' morale. Since each question asked of each participating teacher informant produced its own data point, it was important that the researcher developed a method for capturing and storing the data collected so that its accuracy was not compromised.

In order to maintain the genuine and accurate qualities of the data collected, the researcher deployed two strategies, one for each identified research method described in this section. First, the researcher used survey-type software to deploy the questionnaire. This software ensured that the same questionnaire is deployed to each participating teacher informant. Furthermore, this process promoted teachers with privacy in providing responses, as well as the confidentiality of those responses. Each respondent was emailed a link to an electronic version of the questionnaire, which collected their responses in the setting of their choice. Utilizing this strategy also provided the researcher with a way to assure the safe storage of accurate data collected through this method. A similar plan was also needed in order to store and protect the accuracy of the teacher informants' data related to the interview protocol.

Each participating teacher informant was asked to provide their consent to take part in the interview protocol. Once consent was collected, these teachers were asked for their responses to the eight interview protocol questions listed earlier in this section. These questions were asked to each participating teacher informant by the researcher's colleagues. Each of these interviews were audio recorded, so that each completed interview could be saved as its own separate file by

the researcher. This process allowed the researcher to review each interview in detail in order to transcribe each participating teacher informant's responses to each of the interview protocol questions in an accurate manner. Such practices assured an adequate data storage and protection strategy.

Finally, all participating teacher informants were made aware of the data collection, storage, and analysis strategies planned throughout the study. This information was made available to each prospective participating teacher informant on the consent form that was provided to him or her prior to any involvement in this study taking place. The researcher then proceeded with the questionnaire and interview protocols, collecting and transcribing the data, then starting the plan for data analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The researcher also sought to implement a data analysis plan that described the criteria for interpreting the findings of this qualitative descriptive study. The plan included identification of which data extracted from the study addressed each respective research question, a description of how data components were to be combined to answer specific research questions posed within the study, and an approach to identify any possible differing explanations of the results.

Each instrument utilized was to include its own data analysis and interpretation processes. First, the questionnaire was to collect ordinal data. It was designed to provide teacher informants with a series of aspects that have been found to have an impact on teachers' motivation or morale. These aspects were taken from the literature on this topic, from Michigan Compiled Law 380.1980c, and from the experiences of working in a Priority School from the researcher. Informants were to be asked to select an ordinal value reflective of the positive or negative impact each of the aspects present on the questionnaire. In addition, there was a minor

nominal data aspect to the questionnaire, as reflected by the optional additional aspect that participating teacher informants may choose to include and rate. Participants were then to apply the same rating scale to their added factor, if they chose to include one. While this data would not be tested for statistical significance, it was to be used to determine whether a relationship exists between current educational accountability policy and teachers' motivation and morale. In addition, the data collected from this instrument was to be used to inform the selection of teacher informants to take part in the study's second instrument, the interview protocol. This was to be done by applying descriptive statistics as the strategy for analyzing the data collected from the questionnaire. The researcher would establish and utilize the mode, median and inter-quartile range to analyze this data. This process was intended to point to those teacher informants who felt that the current educational accountability policy had a positive or negative impact on their motivation and morale. Each participating teacher informant who fit these criteria would then contribute to the purposeful sample taking part in the study's interview protocol.

Second, the interview protocol involved an interview facilitator posing additional questions to a purposeful sample within the participating teacher informant sampling that was selected to take part in the questionnaire process. Using a semi-structured format, the interview protocol provided the researcher with both the structure and the flexibility that may be necessary to further investigate the depths of certain responses.

The teachers either worked in a school that is currently considered a Priority School or one that was recently released from the Michigan Department of Education's list of Priority Schools. Both schools are in the same school district in Southeastern Michigan, and service the same community and demographics. The interview protocol collected qualitative data from teacher informants. Data collected from these interviews was audio recorded. These recordings

were used for transcription purposes. The researcher completed all transcriptions after the conclusion of each interview. The transcription process supported the coding strategy to be applied to this data.

Various coding strategies exist within qualitative research. Each coding strategy has its own distinct characteristics. Given (2008) and Mills, Durepos and Weibe (2010) pointed to three progressive coding types, which include open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding takes place when meaningful concepts and categories are labeled during the early stages of coding, through an intensive review and analysis of the data, which produces categorized concepts with no thought given to how concepts might relate to one another (Given, 2008; Mills et al., 2010). This coding strategy transitions into axial coding when this process is repeated until the researcher is able to refine categories in a more specific manner by relating the established categories into more refined subcategories (Given, 2008; Mills et al., 2010). Selective coding takes place when the researcher places an additional focus on a specific connection between a few of the established categories, into a single category (Given, 2008; Mills et al., 2010). One additional type of coding, in vivo coding can be found outside of the progressive coding strategies. In vivo coding is used when codes are derived directly from the data, such as exact terms used by interviewees (Given, 2008).

When considering each of the strategies for coding qualitative data, open coding was the best fit for this study. Once all teacher informants' interviews were transcribed, the researcher initiated a process of open coding for each individual transcription, focusing on the responses to each of the questions included in the interview protocol as individual data sources or points. After the coding process concluded, the researcher then identified and compared any categories derived from each item across all individual transcriptions from all participating teacher

informants from both schools. This was done in order to identify major themes derived from the coded data collected during the study. The researcher then compared the presence of major theme-related data found across both schools to determine any similarities and differences between those who work in a Priority School versus those who worked in a school that was recently released from Michigan's Priority Schools list. This process was used to arrive at conclusions that were utilized to answer Research Questions 2-4, and to supplement the preliminary answers to Research Questions 1 and 5. Comparing the findings of the questionnaire with those of the interviews was to result in triangulation, which would then lend to increased credibility and validity (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012) of this study.

Research Ethics

Among the several critical elements embedded within this study's design, upholding the ethics that are expected of researchers when conducting studies was of the utmost importance to the researcher. Several steps were taken as a means of assuring that ethical research practices take place from the start of the study, through its end.

First, the researcher upheld research ethics by informing potential participating teacher informants of the study. These teachers received a copy of a summary of the research problem, a copy of the study's research questions, the definitions of the key terms identified in the study's Literature Review chapter, and a summary of the process by which they were to be involved in the study. This information led to a process of obtaining these teachers' consent to participate in the study.

Additionally, research ethics were upheld in this study by engaging in a formalized process to obtain the consent of participating teacher informants. The researcher, who wrote this work as his dissertation requirement for his institution's Doctor of Education program, utilized

customized informed consent templates for a questionnaire (see Appendix D) and for an interview (see Appendix E) provided by his institution to fit the design of this study. These documents were provided to each potential participating teacher informant along with the information pertaining to the study. Teachers who received this information and these consent forms then had the ability to make an informed decision as to whether they would take part in the study or not. This left the process by which the researcher followed to acquire approval from his institution's Internal Review Board as the remaining measure to be taken to assure that research ethics were upheld in this study.

Finally, the researcher engaged in a process of obtaining approval from his institution's Internal Review Board prior to informing potential teacher informants or seeking their consent to participate in the study. The researcher obtained certification through his institution's Program for Education and Evaluation in Responsible Research and Scholarship as a prerequisite of seeking this approval. This certification included engaging in several modules focused on research ethics and passing each module's test to demonstrate his proficiency in these research ethics. With this certification complete, the researcher then sought approval for conducting this study by the institution's Internal Review Board. This process required the researcher to complete his institution's Internal Review Board application protocol for this study and await a response from the Board as to whether the study can move forward as proposed. After this process concluded, the researcher received approval from the institution's Internal Review Board. Once this process concluded the researcher proceeded with the study, and its embedded processes for assuring that research ethics are upheld. Evidence of this approval came in the form of a letter from the institution's Internal Review Board (see Appendix A).

Chapter Summary

The methodology of this study on current educational accountability policy's effect on teacher motivation and morale has included a research problem that focuses on the dilemma faced by teachers in Priority Schools when educational accountability sanctions are imposed onto them. In order to address the problem, five research questions were investigated. These questions reflected the researcher's interest in establishing whether current educational accountability policy impacted Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. These questions were to be answered through the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data collected from the implementation of a questionnaire, followed by an interview protocol. Teachers from the same district, some of whom still worked in a Priority School, while the others worked in a school that had been released of its Priority School status, were targeted as the key participating informants of this study. Descriptive statistics were to be applied to the data collected from the questionnaire. The qualitative data collected from the interview protocol was interpreted through a process of open coding and theming. The combination of these processes was to point to conclusions drawn on the topic of interest, and answers to the study's research questions. In order to assure validity, the researcher engaged in practices that support the establishment of credibility, confirmability, and dependability within the study. Each of these key elements within this chapter contributed to a comprehensive conceptual framework, which was used to assure the researcher's adherence to the established plan for conducting this study on the impact of educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale. This adherence was intended to support the data analysis and conclusions drawn, which are reported in the final two chapters of this work.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

This chapter will articulate a thorough analysis of the qualitative data collected from the interview protocol questions that were asked of the six elementary school teachers who worked in their school before, during, and after Priority School status and of the eight middle school teachers who worked in their school before and during Priority School status. The analysis will support findings that will provide answers to each of the study's research questions. In order to accomplish these objectives, this chapter is comprised of four distinct sections.

The first section of this chapter describes the results of the open coding process that was used on the transcribed interview data. These results are represented by six major themes derived from this data. The volume of the recurring presence of each theme is also be shared in this section. This is followed by a detailed analysis of each of the six major themes extracted from the data. Each of these sections includes a description of the data contributing to the six major themes that either supports or clarifies the meaning of each.

The second section of this chapter reports the distribution of each theme across questions from the interview protocol. In order to accomplish this, the researcher combined the data collected from teachers of both schools involved in the study. The second section identifies the most recurring major theme that was found in the data collected from participating teacher informants for each question of the interview protocol. This information is presented for each set of interview protocol questions that pertain to a similar research question. Next, a descriptive analysis of this data is provided. Finally, the findings regarding each of the study's five research questions is discussed.

The third section of the chapter consists of a cross-case analysis of the data. This section also includes a description of the most-recurring major themes that were found in the data

collected from the teachers of each school, from interview protocol questions that aligned to a similar research question. This cross-case analysis supported the findings presented in the second section of this chapter when similar findings were present in both schools from each set of interview protocol questions. Finally, this process was used to provide any explanations as to why the theme-related data collected from the two schools might have differed.

The final section of this chapter revisits the qualitative descriptive study principles identified in the second chapter of this work. In addition, it describes how each of these principles was accomplished within this study. This accomplishment reinforced the use of qualitative descriptive study as the most appropriate research strategy for this investigation.

Themes Derived from Interview Protocol Data

After a process of open coding was enacted on the qualitative data collected within this study, 425 codes were identified. These codes were then put through a process of categorizing which resulted in the discovery of six prominent themes. The themes derived out of this process included: *Diminished Quality of Professional Life, Reformed Practice, Students and Families, Pride and Efficacy*, *Consistent and Unified Staff*, and *Testing*. These themes emerged from coded data collected from various teacher participants and could be found across questions within the interview protocol; however, some themes were better represented across the data set than others. For example, 167 of the codes assigned to data derived from interview protocol questions reflected the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* 72 codes identified within the teachers' responses spoke to the theme of a teacher's *Reformed Practice.* The theme of *Students and Families* included 68 assigned codes. *Pride and Efficacy* was represented by 53 codes. The theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff* contained 49 assigned codes. Finally, the theme of *Testing* was inclusive of 14 codes. It should be noted that there was one code that was

classified as *Unnamed.* This response pertained to a single sentence found in a teacher's response to Question 9 of the interview protocol. This data did not fall under any of the six themes, nor did it have a reasonable number of responses to be assigned to a theme of its own. This being the case, these responses have been withdrawn from the data set.

Theme 1: diminished quality of professional life.

At some point within the process of providing responses to the interview protocol questions, all 14 teachers provided data that spoke to a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life*. This trend, along with the overwhelming number of response data that contributed to this theme, made it the most prevalent theme derived from the data.

Responses to Question 1 of the interview protocol supported this theme, though in two distinct avenues. These facets include the impact of Priority School sanctions on teachers as professionals as well as on the emotional state of the teachers. Three code types spoke to an impact on teachers as professionals. The first of these types was based on the idea of an increased workload for Priority School teachers. The second code type that spoke to the impact on teachers as professionals pertained to teachers' feelings of inferiority to non-Priority School teachers, whether from a self-perception or their interpretation of how outside support staff viewed their professional quality. The third code type within this theme spoke to the idea that greater accountability is imposed onto Priority School teachers. Response data pertained to the impact of Priority School sanctions on the emotional state of teachers, as well. The overwhelming majority of these impacts had a negative or harmful connotation. These responses spoke to the policy's "draining" effect on teachers' emotional, physical and mental states. Additionally, a variety of emotional impacts were reflected in these responses. These impacts included the presence or increased level of pressure, stress, worry, paranoia and fear.

The theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* was also present in teachers' responses to Question 2 of the interview protocol. Teachers' responses suggested that they had less freedom to teach the way they wanted to in a Priority School. This included a reference to the rigid nature of the daily instructional bell schedule and expectations to adhere to it in a Priority School. They suggested that their workplace was more fun and relaxing prior to Priority School status, as well. Again, the idea of greater accountability being placed onto Priority School teachers surfaced within the responses to this question. Furthermore, responses to this question related to the added stress, pressure and insecurity teachers feel while being exposed to a perceived increase in monitoring and evaluation of their work. Finally, the idea of teachers being overwhelmed by the amount of work needed to eliminate the school's Priority School label was reflected within the responses to this question, as well.

Moreover, this theme was found within teachers' responses to Question 2b of the interview protocol, which was only asked of teachers who worked in the school that had eliminated its Priority School status. These responses again spoke to the teachers' perception of having an increased workload imposed onto them while working in a Priority School. Conjointly, responses from this question spoke to a sense of relief after coming out of Priority School status; however, some data pointed to the school still being a stressful place, where teachers have to regain their confidence, after Priority School status. One coded response to this question that fell into the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* suggested that teachers' sense of urgency and reform program implementation fidelity had been on the decline (not eliminated) since coming out of Priority School status.

The data that pertained to the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* from teachers' responses to Question 3 of the interview protocol spoke to the level of effort required

of teachers while working in a Priority School and the impact of this requirement on those teachers. Teachers' responses suggested that they see the challenge of working out of Priority School status as daunting. In like manner, teachers were consistent in their feeling that working in a Priority School required more effort than they had previously experienced in their workplace. Responses derived from this portion of the data set reflected effort level descriptors such as "high," "increased," "more," and "inhumane." In addition, response data suggested teachers' perception of having no margin for error while working in a Priority School. Along with this example, there were responses that spoke to the impact of this level of effort on teachers. Responses reiterated the idea that working in a Priority School is "draining." The other code that spoke to the impact of the effort required of teachers in a Priority School suggested that the reward for coming out of Priority School status does not match the immense amount of effort needed to achieve this goal. This code suggested that the reward was disappointing, while the effort needed to obtain it was overwhelming.

The theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* that was found within the responses to Question 4 again spoke to the higher expectations placed onto Priority School teachers, as compared to others. These responses spoke to teachers needing to give the highest level of work performance possible to eliminate the Priority School label. Some of these responses quantified this work performance. These responses suggested that in order to succeed as a Priority School, students had to demonstrate beyond the amount of academic progress that would typically be expected in a school year. Teachers' responses supported the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* by speaking to the increased pressure placed onto Priority School teachers.

There was a minimal presence of coded data pertaining to the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* from the responses collected from Question 5. In addition, the only theme-related data from Question 5 were derived from the response of one teacher participant. These responses included a reiteration of the high level of effort needed from teachers in Priority Schools. The same participant was unable to recall a time when students' academic performance improved while working in a Priority School. No other *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data was collected from teachers' responses.

Question 7 led to teacher responses that also contributed to the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* Like the coded data extracted from other questions, teachers' responses to this question spoke to negative experiences they felt when students' academic performance declined during Priority School status. These experiences included teachers feeling a negative self-perception, a concern about how evaluators perceive their work, and questions related to the coherence and quality of the instructional practices deployed by themselves and by their coworkers.

The theme of *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* was also supported by responses collected from Question 8. These responses reflected teachers' professional experiences before and during Priority School status. This data was collected despite the design of this question focusing on teachers' feelings or attitudes about their school or climate before Priority School status.

Diminished Quality of Professional Life response data from Question 8 pertained to teachers' experiences before Priority School status spoke to the emotions, anticipation and freedom teachers felt at this time. Teachers expressed positive feelings about their work and workplace before Priority School status. Coded data included descriptions of teachers'

happiness, workplace enjoyment and the reduced stress level and pressure they felt before their school was identified as a Priority School. Additionally, coded data derived from this question suggested teachers' motivation and feelings toward their workplace before Priority School status. According to this data, the approaching Priority Schools label was sensed by teachers before the school had been identified. Teachers were aware that there were issues with student achievement rates. Data was suggestive that this anticipation had a negative impact on teachers' feelings and attitudes toward their workplace. Finally, teachers' responses to this question spoke to a sense of freedom they felt before the school was identified as a Priority School. This freedom for teachers was described as "easier" (Participant 12, May 17, 2018), "relaxed" (Participant 14, June 14, 2018) and "carefree" (Participant 6, March 24, 2018). On top of this, teachers suggested that they had more instructional freedom before Priority School status (Participant 5, March 22, 2018; Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 9, May 17, 2018).

Diminished Quality of Professional Life data from Question 8 of the interview protocol also reflected teachers' professional experiences during Priority School status. Most of this data suggested the increased presence of stress felt by teachers at this time. Teachers reported heightened rates of pressure (Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 12, May 17, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018), tension (Participant 12, May 17, 2018), burnout (Participant 14, June 14, 2018) and blame (Participant 13, June 5, 2018) while their school held the Priority School label. Furthermore, teachers suggested that there was a decrease in the instructional freedom they had during Priority School status. This was similar to the data pertaining to the time before the school was labeled as a Priority School. Teachers shared their concerns related to the number of instructional reform initiatives the school was required to put in place, the time the staff had to implement the initiatives, and the impact of these new practices on previous

instructional program offerings. This data further supported the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.*

Question 9 of the interview protocol focused on teachers' feelings and attitudes about their school *after* Priority School status. The *Diminished Quality of Life* responses to this question not only described these feelings but suggested what has caused teachers to feel this way during Priority School status as well. Teachers described various upset feelings caused by the Priority Status process. Their responses to this question included feeling disrespected (Participant 13, June 5, 2018), less happy (Participant 6, March 24, 2018), uneasy (Participant 13, June 5, 2018), stressed (Participant 9, May 17, 2018; Participant 13, June 5, 2018), invaded (Participant 5, March 22, 2018) and paranoid (Participant 1, March 23, 2018) while their school was labeled as a Priority School. Additionally, teachers reported the causes that led them to feel this way. They felt uncertain about the school district's ability to avoid closure by making the required improvements. They reported that the instructional reform initiatives that were put in place to make these improvements had an inconsistent impact on staff members of the school, as well. Additionally, as was the case in responses to previous questions, teachers reported that the increased workload placed upon them contributed to these feelings. Finally, teachers reported an increase in the amount of accountability imposed upon them during Priority School status. Furthermore, they described practices of intensified instructional monitoring by administrators at this time. Yet, some teachers felt that they were not praised for doing a good job through the intensified monitoring process during Priority School status.

On Question 9b, teacher informants from one of the two schools were asked about their feelings and attitudes toward their school or climate *after* Priority School status. The *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data extracted from teachers' responses to Question 9b was

suggestive of Priority School status being a traumatizing experience for teachers, leaving various residual effects. Teachers expressed feelings of fear, disappointment and paranoia resulting from the Priority School process. Finally, teachers expressed lingering feelings of stress. Terms such as burnout, pressure and overwhelmed were typically found in teachers' descriptions of this lingering stress even after Priority School status had ended in their school. Furthermore, these negative descriptors revealed the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* in the wake of the Priority School process.

The theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* received the largest number of theme-related resonses. The theme with the next greatest amount of supporting response data, *Reformed Practice,* is described in the next section.

Theme 2: reformed practice.

The second most prevalent theme emerging from the data is that of *Reformed Practice.* This theme refers to the various ways teachers' instructional planning and delivery practices changed as a result of their school being labeled as a Priority School. Data provided by every teacher who took part in this process contributed to this theme.

The theme-related data derived from Question 1 of the transcribed teacher interview responses reflected generalizations pertaining to teachers' work relating to school improvement, curricular awareness and in overall knowledge of the State's educational accountability policy. The most prevalent of these descriptors was the data that pertained to teachers' work relating to school improvement initiatives. Data reflecting this aspect included teachers' perception that their curricular awareness had improved while their school was labeled as a Priority School. These responses described changes in teachers' data analysis skills, organization in planning instruction and focus on assessments. Teachers' responses within this area all spoke to how

these skills had changed within them, as compared to their professional experiences before Priority School status.

In addition, Question 2 produced data that supported the *Reformed Practice* theme. Like the theme-supporting data from Question 1, the responses of Question 2 predominantly reflected the various ways that teachers' approaches to planning and delivering instruction had changed due to Priority School status. Theme-related responses from this question included increases in curricular alignment, data analysis and focus on testing than the time preceding Priority School status as well.

Question 2b produced a small amount of theme-supporting data. Most of the data spoke to more stability with curriculum and instructional initiatives being in place after Priority School status had ended. These responses included teachers stating that fewer new initiatives were being imposed onto them during this time. On top of this, some of the theme-related data reiterated that the instructional initiatives that were imposed during Priority School status were still being implemented after this process had ended in the school. However, a small amount of this data speaking to the *Reformed Practice* theme suggested a concern with the fidelity by which these instructional initiatives were being implemented after Priority School status. This data related to the theme as it still suggested that the initiatives were being practiced by some, though possibly not by all teachers in the school.

Data reflecting the theme of *Reformed Practice* that was extracted from Question 3 was minimal. Within this question, only two types of responses were related to this theme. These responses conveyed the need for a great deal of teacher effort during Priority School status, as well as the increased data analysis practices that were experienced during this time.

Like Question 3, Question 4 produced a small amount of coded data that pertained to the theme of *Reformed Practice.* The various topics discussed by teacher participants that aligned to this theme included an acknowledgment of the Priority School initiatives improving performance, an increased focus on instructional practice during Priority School status, and the need for teachers to motivate students and combining their social and academic experiences during this time, as well.

The presence of coded data supporting the theme of *Reformed Practice* was much more prevalent in the responses to Question 5. A few of the theme-reflecting responses from this question reflected curricular changes that were positively perceived, such as instruction with more rigor and an increased focus on instruction and assessment during Priority School status. However, most of the theme-supporting coded responses collected from this question spoke to teachers' awareness of student achievement data during Priority School status. These responses suggested how teachers learned how to use data more effectively and how it can be time consuming. However, most of these responses pertained to how certain instructional initiatives led to improved student performance. The changes supporting these improvements included new instructional practices, specifically in reading and writing instruction. Furthermore, one code that supported this theme from Question 5 spoke to the importance of providing students with feedback related to their performance on assessments supported improvements in academic performance.

When the topic of questioning turned to stagnating student performance in Question 6, the concept of academic achievement performance analysis was a consistent presence within responses, as well. Data from this question mentioned that stagnating student performance was observed through regularly tracking student data. This statement added to support the

identification of needed instructional changes and the need for further assessment data analysis. However, data supporting this theme derived from Question 6 spoke to the type of teacher response that was prompted by stagnating student performance. This included several different ideas. These ideas pertained to teachers reflecting on their instructional practice, teachers reteaching prior content, and reteaching current content differently than the first instructional delivery. In addition, theme-supported data from this question pointed to discussions about how to change instructional practice, including the utilization of various support staff members to enhance student learning outcomes.

Question 7 produced few responses from teacher participants that supported the theme of *Reformed Practice.* Most of these responses spoke to changes in instructional practices by teachers after they observed trends in declining student performance.

Only four responses supporting the theme of *Reformed Practice* were provided from teachers' responses to Question 8. These responses reflected an increased focus and emphasis on the school's curriculum and a focus on improved student performance during Priority School status that had not been present prior to this time. Again, the responses suggested a focus on improved instructional delivery and student performance that was not present during the time preceding the school being labeled as a Priority School.

While the theme of *Reformed Practice* was the second most recurring theme extracted from the interview transcript data, one of the other established themes appeared nearly as much as it did. The theme, *Students and Families*, emerged nearly as frequently as *Reformed Practice*.

Theme 3: students and families.

Students and Families was found to be the third most recurring theme found across the data collected in the study. This theme referred to the various ways that teachers' instructional

planning and delivery practices changed as a result of their school being labeled as a Priority School. All but one of the participating teacher informants provided responses that were connected to this theme. Additionally, these responses spanned across nearly every interview protocol question. Question 8 and Question 9b were the only questions that did not garner a response that aligned to this theme.

When analyzing the coded data extracted from Question 1, the theme of *Students and Families* did not have a strong recurring presence. The theme-related data collected within this question reflected some perceptions that were specific to students and others that were specific to issues related to their families. One of the responses that referred specifically to students suggested that teachers utilized Priority School status to motivate students (Participant 7, March 24, 2018). Another teacher put an emphasis on students spoke to the idea of improving students' academic performance as well (Participant 12, May17, 2018). However, this response stressed the importance of teachers having a sound knowledge of their students in order to prompt this improvement. The data that emphasized families pertained to geographical (Participant 8, March 24, 2018) and traumatic issues (Participant 4, March 23, 2018) that teachers perceived as contributing to the challenges present in their Priority School. One of these responses referred to a school district policy that allows children who reside outside of the school district and outside of the county to attend the district's schools (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). This response data suggested that the out-of-district students who were enrolled in the school supported the school's overall declining performance, which led to its label of a Priority School. The other response that spoke to students' families pertained to the various types of traumatic experiences students in the school have endured, when compared to students in more affluent school districts. This response suggested that the students in this Priority School had experienced more traumatic experiences

stemming from the home than students who attend other school districts would have experienced, thus causing the more traumatized students to encounter greater difficulties in achieving at high levels within a Priority School (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). Both family-specific, theme-related data derived from Question 1 suggested a disadvantaged student population, due to either where they lived geographically, or the type of home environment in which they lived.

Several responses supporting the theme *Students and Families* were extracted from Question 2. Some of these responses suggested a perceived lack of academic and behavioral accountability for students (Participant 3, March 23, 2018; Participant 10, May 17, 2018). Additionally, response data suggested that the challenges in the school outside of student achievement hadn't been considered throughout the Priority School process. These responses pointed out that students did not feel a connection to the school during Priority School status, and that students did not have access to extracurricular experiences during this time (Participant 10, May 17, 2018).

When analyzing the coded data from the responses to Question 2b of the interview protocol, minimal theme-related response data was found. This data conveyed a perception that the school's curricular changes were not meeting the needs of the current students of the school (Participant 3, March 23, 2018). One response pointed to the perceived challenges of working with students who have experienced trauma (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). No other responses relating to the theme of *Students and Families* were derived from this question.

An analysis of the responses to Question 3 produced a few responses that pertained to the theme of *Students and Families.* Two of the three theme-related responses referred to teachers' perceptions of students' ability to learn (Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 10, May 17,

2018). These responses reflected the difficulties that teachers experienced while delivering instruction to their students. The other theme-related response referred to perceived challenges that students had with the increased focus on core content curriculum during Priority School status (Participant 9, May 17, 2018).

The presence of theme-related responses to Question 4 were slightly more prevalent than those of Question 3. Most the *Students and Families* responses to this question suggested what teachers had to do to support students in the Priority School setting. These included performing at a high level at work (Participant 3, March 23, 2018), meeting students where they are academically (Participant 2, March 23, 2018) and offering students incentives for improved performance (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). The other theme-supporting responses to Question 3 pertained to some of the aspects that teachers felt were missing or getting in the way of students achieving success. One of these challenges included perceptions of students' prioritizing socializing over learning (Participant 9, May 17, 2018). Also pointed out was students' lack of understanding of, and desire to eliminate Priority School status in their school (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Another obstacle pointed out in these responses was gaining the amount of parental support needed for Priority School students to be successful (Participant 13, June 5, 2018).

When continuing the analysis of responses that fell under the theme of *Students and Families,* Question 5 was found to have produced many more theme-related responses than any of the questions analyzed in this section. Most of these responses pointed to various efforts that teachers had to make for students to improve upon their academic performance. These efforts included when teachers differentiated instruction and assessment (Participant 12, May 17, 2018), implemented new instructional practices (Participant 8, March 24, 2018), shared students'

assessment data with them (Participant 11, March 24, 2018), set goals with students based on this data (Participant 9, May 17, 2018), maintained high expectations of students for learning (Participant 13, June 5, 2018) and offered students incentives for improving upon their academic performance (Participant 9, May 17, 2018). An additional set of these responses suggested certain evidence that pointed to when students' academic performance improved. These responses described that students' performance improved when they could provide an observable demonstration of skills (Participant 14, June 14, 2018), when they increased the amount of writing they were producing (Participant 13, June 5, 2018)and when they were invested in the assessment (Participant 6, March 24, 2018). A third group of theme-related responses to this question pertained to students' reactions when they demonstrated improved academic performance. Teachers suggested that when this happened, students' confidence increased (Participant 9, May 17, 2018), and they were motivated to try to do more with the content (Participant 14, June 14, 2018). Another participant spoke to students' responses, though it was related to the school environment. This response suggested that students appeared to be less angry when school rules were more relaxed (Participant 10, May 17, 2018). The remaining theme-related responses from Question 5 suggested that only stable, not transient, students improved upon their academic performance in the Priority School setting (Participant 13, June 5, 2018), and that smaller class sizes supported a teacher's ability to attain improvements in students' academic performance (Participant 1, March 23, 2018).

Like Question 5, Question 6 produced many teacher responses that supported the *Students and Families* theme. All but two of these responses pertained to perceptions regarding student-produced obstacles to performing beyond the stagnant level. These perceived obstacles included students' lack of prerequisite skills or having a below grade level skill set and

transience. Additional student-produced obstacles pointed to various intrinsic psychological factors. Such factors included students' boredom with the content, lack of motivation, traumatic experiences, inability to be taught and more. The remaining two theme-related responses extracted from teachers' responses to Question 6 did not have any observable similarities. One suggested that when students demonstrate minimal growth, it is perceived as stagnant performance (Participant 3, March 23, 2018). The other response suggested that students' placement into classes that appear to be outside of their ability level causes stagnation in their academic performance (Participant 7, March 24, 2018).

A slightly smaller amount of theme-related responses were found within the data collected from Question 7 of the interview protocol. All but one of these *Students and Families* responses suggested the reasons why students' academic performance had at times declined. Every one of these responses pointed to student-produced issues being the reason why such a decline occurred. These issues included students' behavior, laziness, inability to retain content, seasonal distractions, lack of motivation, newness to the school, inability to connect prerequisite skills with current content, inability to connect instructional content with application of skills, test fatigue and inability to reach their goals. The lone remaining theme-related response suggested that teachers are negatively impacted when students' academic performance declines (Participant 6, March 24, 2018).

Question 9 only contained a few responses that fell under the theme of *Students and Families.* Some of these responses appeared to conflict with each other. One of these responses suggested that students' work habits couldn't be changed (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). However, one teacher suggested that when teachers are more able to form positive relationships with students, the performance level of students would increase (Participant 13, June 5, 2018).

The remaining theme-related response suggested that students should be held accountable for their academic performance (Participant 13, June 5, 2018).

The theme of *Students and Families c*ontributed many responses that were assigned to the data set. The next highest recurring theme was represented by slightly fewer responses, though is still considered among the six major themes extracted from the data collected from the study's teacher interview protocol process.

Theme 4: pride and efficacy.

The fourth major theme derived from the study's teacher interview protocol data focused on teachers' *Pride and Efficacy.* The responses that pertained to teachers' pride spoke to their feelings of satisfaction or accomplishment from the results of their work. The data that reflected teachers' efficacy spoke more to teachers' feelings about their ability to accomplish the work required of Priority Schools. All 14 of the participating teacher informants provided responses that supported this theme. Similar to the previously described themes, the response data supporting the theme of *Pride and Efficacy* were found to be more prevalent among the teacher responses to some of the interview protocol questions than others.

Participating teacher informants provided several theme-related responses to Question 1. Most of these responses pertained to a positive impact experienced by teachers as a result of working through the sanctions of the State's educational accountability policy. Data that fell into this category included teachers' perception of the policy sanctions having a motivating effect. This motivation was described to impact both individual teachers, as well as the entire staff of the school (Participant 3, March 23, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 11, May 17, 2018). These *Pride and Efficacy* responses also suggested that while teachers were hurt when learning that their school was labeled as a Priority School, they took this label personally,

which may have supported their motivation. Additionally, theme-related responses from this question revealed that teachers' perspectives had been changed while working in a Priority School, as they had grown professionally (Participant 7, March 24, 2018) and felt a sense of accomplishment while working through the process (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). This sense of accomplishment was likely due to the fact that student achievement gaps had closed in the school during the Priority School process (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Other teachers spoke to the pride they took in their work and in their schools prior to being labeled as a Priority School. One of these responses suggested that teachers had believed that the policy would not affect them before their school was labeled as a Priority School (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). A participant also told how the labeling of the school as a Priority School took teachers by surprise (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). In contrast, the only remaining theme-supporting response spoke to how the policy had prompted no emotional change within a teacher (Participant 3, March 23, 2018).

The presence of response data supporting the theme of *Pride and Efficacy* Question 2 was close to non-existent. Only one theme-related response was unearthed from this question. Similar to some of the responses supporting this theme from Question 1, this response spoke to a motivational change that had taken place within a teacher, as a result of working in a Priority School. This response pertained to how the policy inspired the teacher to motivate others to engage in the process of ongoing improvement that was required of Priority Schools (Participant 7, March 24, 2018).

The volume of theme-related responses to Question 2b was the same as those of Question 2. Only one *Pride and Efficacy* response was unearthed from this question. Since this question was only asked of teachers who worked in a school that had improved its way out of Priority

School status, this response spoke to a confidence that had been regained by teachers after Priority School status had ended (Participant 11, May 17, 2018). No other theme-related responses from Question 2b occurred.

Question 3 led to a slightly larger number of responses that related to the theme of teachers' *Pride and Efficacy* than Question 2 and Question 2b. Teachers provided a variety of theme-related responses to Question 3. All but one of these responses pertained to an assessment of the effort teachers were giving while working in a Priority School. These responses described the level of effort given by teachers in their Priority School as high level and sufficient (Participant 3, March 23, 2018; Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 7, March 24, 2018). These participants reported that teachers were working hard while their school was a Priority School. The other theme-related response from this question supported the theme of *Pride and Efficacy* pertained to the self-accountability and high expectations held by a teacher (Participant 2, March 23, 2018).

As was the case for the *Pride and Efficacy* responses to Question 2 and Question 2b, Question 4 produced only one theme-related code. This code suggested that in order for the school to improve its performance enough to eliminate its label of a Priority School, teachers have to believe in the work that is being asked of them. No other responses supporting the theme of *Pride and Efficacy* were found among teachers' responses to Question 4.

Like Question 1, Question 5 produced several responses from teachers that supported the theme of *Pride and Efficacy.* Most of this response data pertained to the impact of improved student academic performance on teachers. These responses implied a positive impact that teachers felt when this took place. The impact felt by teachers when students' performance improved included teachers wanting more improvement, to work harder for their students and to

try new instructional practices for better outcomes. One response suggested that improvements in students' academic performance prompted hope within teachers (Participant 10, May 17, 2018). Furthermore, a teacher spoke to the high value that Priority School teachers placed on improved student academic performance (Participant 12, May 17, 2018). This respondent also eluded to a belief that the work performance of teachers was related to the academic achievement outcomes produced by students in their school (Participant 12, May 17, 2018). A different perspective was provided through a teacher's report that the Priority School label provided motivation to prove that the school was better than the label suggested (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). Finally, one teacher addressed *Pride and Efficacy* by speaking to how teachers had been acknowledged when students had made improvements in their academic performance (Participant 10, May 17, 2018).

Question 6 did not produce the volume of theme-related responses that Question 5 did. Only two responses to this question reflected the theme of *Pride and Efficacy*. One response spoke to a teacher's self-accountability for results (Participant 2, March 23, 2018). The other theme-related response pertained to teachers believing that a little academic growth would propel future growth (Participant 11, May 17, 2018).

Teachers' provided only one more theme-related responses to Question 7 than to Question 6 of the interview protocol. Two teachers' responses to this question pertained to an inability to recall a time when students' performance declined during Priority School status (Participant 11, May 17, 2018; Participant 12, May 17, 2018). Additionally, a participant's responses reflected feeling surprised by a decline in students' performance (Participant 5, March 22, 2018). The remaining *Pride and Efficacy* response suggested that a positive impact was felt

by a teacher when encouragement from support staff members from outside of the school district was received (Participant 10, May 17, 2018).

Only four theme-related responses were found among teachers' responses to Question 8. Teachers' responses pertained to the pride and confidence teachers had in their schools before Priority School status (Participant 2, March 23, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 10, March 24, 2018). The other theme-related response to this question pertained to the impact of staff negativity during Priority School status, and how it prompted a teacher to be more positive at work to counteract that negativity (Participant 7, March 24, 2018).

Two teachers provided responses to Question 9 that supported the theme of *Pride and Efficacy*. These responses pointed to teachers' positive reactions during Priority School status. The teachers reported positive attitudes and eagerness to show that they were capable and motivation to persevere through the Priority School process (Participant 3, March 23, 2018; Participant 7, March 24, 2018).

The final question of the interview protocol, Question 9b, was only asked of teachers who worked in the school that had eliminated its status as a Priority School. Teachers' responses to this question also reflected the theme of *Pride and Efficacy.* Most of these responses suggested teachers' positive feelings since working out of the sanctions imposed onto the school after it was labeled as a Priority School. These included feelings of hope (Participant 5, March 22, 2018) and a desire that the result of the Priority School experience would prompt increased positivity among the other teachers of the school (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). One other response spoke to the high value that teachers placed on the recognition they received when the school's Priority School label had been eliminated (Participant 3, March 23, 2018).

The responses supporting the theme of teachers' *Pride and Efficacy* did not appear as often as those of the major themes previously described in this section. However, it still had enough supporting responses to be considered among the six major themes identified across the study's interview protocol data. A fifth theme, *Consistent and Unified Staff,* had nearly the same amount of theme-related responses as *Pride and Efficacy*, and is described in the next section.

Theme 5: consistent and unified staff.

The fifth major theme derived from the interview protocol responses of the participating teacher informants was a *Consistent and Unified Staff.* Coded responses that aligned to this theme either pertained to participants' perceptions regarding the importance of keeping a consistent staff intact throughout the Priority School process. This theme was found to have a recurring presence in teachers' responses to every interview question, with one exception. Question 2b did not receive any responses that aligned to this theme. This question was only asked of the teachers who worked in the school that had eliminated its status as a Priority School. Overall though, this theme consisted of several responses collected from teachers throughout the process.

A few theme-related responses were produced from participating teachers' responses to Question 1. Some of this data reflected the aspect of a consistent staff, while others reflected the topic of a unified staff. The theme-related responses that pertained to consistency with staffing in a Priority School had the concept of staff turnover in common. This data suggested that teachers sought to leave the school when the school had been labeled as a Priority School. A separate theme-related idea pointed to the turnover in school administrative leadership during the Priority School process. The other two response types pertained to a unification of the staff during Priority School status. The first of these types reflected a common sense of urgency that

was prompted among staff members at this time. The other type suggested that the Priority School label galvanized the teachers in terms of utilizing similar strategies to improve their instructional practice.

The theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff* was found in the responses to Question 2 of the interview protocol as well. Minimal theme-related data unearthed from this question pertained to the aspect of consistency within the staff of a Priority School. This data pointed to a negative impact on school performance when teacher turnover was present within the school. In contrast to the theme-related responses supporting the aspect of a unified staff from Question 1, the responses supporting this aspect from Question 2 provided conflicting information. Some of this data suggested that the teachers were unified under Priority School status, including increases in the structure and coherence of instructional practices among teachers, as well as increased teacher collaboration processes during this time. On the other hand, some of the theme-supporting responses from Question 2 that pertained to teacher unification of staff members pointed to a negative impact caused by Priority School status. This data suggested that while the school was labeled as a Priority School, the policy caused a division between teachers and administrators. The other response type suggesting such a negative impact spoke to the presence of the teacher evaluation process during the Priority School process, and how it prompted a reduction in collaboration between teachers.

The theme-related responses to Question 3 also touched on both aspects of this theme. The data reflecting the topic of staff consistency revealed an issue with staff turnover during Priority School status, and the importance of retaining staff members for the sake of carrying out the established school reform initiatives required by the policy with fidelity. Like the theme-related data addressing staff unification from Question 2, these responses provided conflicting

insights. Half of these responses suggested the presence of staff unification in the Priority School, while the other half suggested more of a division. The staff unification responses suggested that the Priority School administrators were working hard and that all staff had to be involved in the school's improvement efforts while progressing through this process. The responses that suggested a division among staff members during Priority School status was caused due to the perception of administration pushing initiatives for personal gain, rather than for the good of the school district. Furthermore, these responses suggested less teacher collaboration while the school was labeled a Priority School.

Question 4 produced a significantly greater volume of theme-related data than any of the preceding questions. Within these responses, there were none that spoke to the topic of staff consistency. The responses derived from the responses to Question 4 pertained to staff unification factors that are needed in a Priority School. A small amount of response data within this group pointed to the unification of teachers supporting the relinquishment of the school's Priority School status. The responses that spoke to the factors regarding staff unification that are necessary in a Priority School included the need for a collective commitment by all staff members to several activities. These activities included having a common definition of the type of high-level work performance needed from teachers, implementing the established instructional reform initiatives with fidelity, collaborating with each other and to be involved in school improvement initiatives.

Very little data pertained to the theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff* assigned to the data derived from teachers' responses to Question 5. The idea of staff unification was not found within this data. Instead, the response data pointed to the aspect of staff consistency, specifically

the presence of teacher turnover in the Priority School. No other theme-related data were established within the data collected from this question.

Like the data derived from Question 5, Question 6 only produced a small amount of data that supported the theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff*. This data fell under the category of staff unification, as it pointed to an issue of a teacher's efforts to prompt meaningful changes in the school being stifled by colleagues during the Priority School process. No other theme-supporting data were derived from the interview transcript data from Question 6.

Question 7 also produced a small amount of theme-related data. These responses included an emphasis on staff unification and did not pertain to the topic of staff consistency. They provided perceptions of a relationship between teacher collaboration and declining student performance, though through two distinctively different lenses. This data suggested that an absence of collaborative teaming among teachers ultimately contributed to declines in student performance. Other theme-related data suggested that when student performance declined, this prompted collaborative discussions between teachers. These two theme-related response types reflected varying experiences and perceptions among Priority School teachers, as related to the interconnectedness between declining student performance and teacher collaboration.

The theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff* was found more often when analyzing data from teachers' responses to Question 8 of the interview protocol process. These theme-related responses covered both aspects of staff consistency and staff unification in the Priority School setting. The response data aligned to the topic of staff consistency pointed to a perception of teacher turnover, specifically, the presence of new and unfamiliar staff having a negative impact on teachers' morale. The data that pertained to the concept of a unified staff all pointed to a clear and common perception of the impact of a Priority School label on the unity of staff. Most of

these responses suggested that the staff was less connected and less unified while their school was considered a Priority School, as compared to the time preceding Priority School status. A small amount of theme-related data countered this perception, as it suggested that there was less collaboration among teachers before Priority School sanctions were imposed onto the school.

Question 9 produced several responses that related to the theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff.* Every one of these responses pertained to the concept of a consistent staff, while none applied to the topic of staff unification. Most of these theme-related responses suggested trends of teachers fleeing the school and the district after the school had been labeled as a Priority School. Several others pointed to increases in teachers leaving the district during this time. This data suggested a negative impact caused by this turnover on teachers' morale. Other theme-related data unearthed from this question acknowledged the loyalty shown by teachers who stayed with the district and with their schools during Priority School status.

Finally, regarding the theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff,* a few responses to Question 9b were found to be inclusive of such staff-related aspects. Regarding staff consistency, response data reiterated the high rate of teacher turnover the school experienced during Priority School status. Other theme-related responses to this question spoke more to the side of staff unification. This data pointed to a distrust of leadership that had been developed by teachers since coming out of Priority School status. Other response data spoke to the importance of celebrating the accomplishment of eliminating the school's Priority School label but needing to quickly refocus everyone on the work that is needed to keep the school from moving back into Priority School status and further sanctions.

Much like the other major themes found across teachers' responses to the interview protocol questions, the theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff* was supported by a substantial

quantity of theme-related responses. The final major theme had the fewest theme-related responses of any of the six. However, due to the recurring nature of this theme, provided by more than half of the participating teacher informants, across multiple interview questions, this topic was worthy of inclusion into the group of major themes that were lifted from the study's teacher interview protocol data.

Theme 6: testing.

The last of the six major themes consisted of responses that primarily focused on the topic of *Testing.* This theme was the least prevalent of all the themes, accumulating the least amount of theme-related responses across the entire data set. Furthermore, these responses were only unearthed from four of the interview questions. The questions that pertained to improved, stagnating and declining student performance, Question 2, Question 5, Question 6 and Question 7, were those that received responses inclusive of responses that supported this theme.

Only one response type pertaining to *Testing* was given by participating teacher informants when they were asked Question 2 of the interview protocol. These responses suggested that Priority School status brought about an increase in the presence of testing, and in the focus on test results, as compared to the time when the school was not labeled as a Priority School. No other theme-related data were collected within the responses to Question 2 of the interview protocol process.

Theme-related data supporting the theme of *Testing* were found in the teachers' responses to Question 5 as well. This question collected the most theme-related responses from teachers of any of the other questions that prompted responses associated with *Testing.* Every one of the responses that supported this theme found among responses to Question 5 referred to assessment data serving as evidence of either improved or stagnating student performance. Four of the five

theme-related responses suggested that students' assessment data, or test scores, were evidence of improved academic performance. The remaining responses suggested that student assessment results were indicative of stagnating student performance. No response data were collected from Question 5 that pertained to assessment data serving as evidence of declining student performance.

A few theme-related response types were derived from teachers' responses to Question 6. These responses did not necessarily interconnect, though some provided recurring ideas unearthed from previous interview questions. For example, response data from this question pertained to the perception that there was an increased focus on assessments in the school during Priority School status. Other response data pointed to assessment scores serving as evidence of stagnating student performance. Furthermore, there were two other ideas reflected in the theme-related data from this question. The first of these two ideas pointed to the school's trends of improvement in overall student performance. The other idea suggested that students' test scores not necessarily being indicative of their true ability. The only remaining theme-related data that supported the theme of *Testing* were found in the responses to Question 7.

As was the case for Question 6, Question 7 garnered a small amount of response data that supported the theme of *Testing.* Half of this data pertained to teachers knowing that students' performance had declined when students demonstrated a decline in their assessment scores. The remaining theme-related responses suggested why the scores had declined. These responses pointed to an over-testing of students, resulting in a loss of instructional time as the reason behind such a decline. No other response data supporting the theme of *Testing* were extracted from teachers' responses to Question 7 of the study's interview protocol.

The final theme of *Testing* accumulated the least number of supporting data as any of the major themes derived from teachers' responses to the study's interview protocol questions. This theme was reflected in the fewest number interview questions, when compared to the others. However, the theme's recurrence across multiple questions served as justification for its inclusion in this group of major themes.

All of the major themes identified recurred across participants' responses to the study's interview protocol. A discussion about the interpretation of these recurrences will be discussed in the next chapter. Before this takes place though, it is necessary to analyze of the distribution of each of the six major themes across each of the interview protocol.

Distribution of Themes across Interview Protocol Questions

Prior to uncovering the six major themes, it was necessary to categorize the coded data from the teacher interview transcriptions. Since numerical data can be used to support qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994), these themes were substantiated by their presence within this data. While each of these six major themes holds relevance when seeking to interpret this data, observing the frequency of each theme across each of the 11 interview protocol questions can provide further support to such an interpretation. Table 1 reveals the percentage of response data that reflect each theme within the responses of each question. Each theme's name has been abbreviated in this table. Following the order by which they were presented earlier in this chapter, Theme 1 (*DQoPL*) pertains to the data for a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* Theme 2 (*RP*) reflects the data for *Reformed Practice.* Theme 3 (*S&F)* pertains to the theme of *Students and Families*. Theme 4 *(P&E)* represents *Pride and Efficacy.* Theme 5 *(C&US)* represents the data for a *Consistent and Unified Staff.* Finally, the data found within the Theme 6 *(T)* field reflects data pertaining to *Testing.*

Table 1

Distribution of Theme-Related Coded Responses from Interview Protocol Questions

Interview Question	Total Codes (n)	Percentage of Each Question's Theme-Related Codes					
		Theme 1: DQoPL	*Theme 2: RP*	*Theme 3: S&F*	*Theme 4: P&E*	*Theme 5: C&US*	*Theme 6: T*
Q1	60	**45.0%**	20.0%	6.7%	20.0%	8.3%	0%
Q2	43	**44.2%**	25.6%	11.6%	2.3%	14.0%	2.3%
Q2b	14	**50.0%**	35.7%	7.1%	7.1%	0%	0%
Q3	30	**43.3%**	6.7%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0%
Q4	30	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	3.3%	**36.7%**	0%
Q5	53	3.8%	**32.1%**	30.2%	22.6%	1.9%	9.4%
Q6	42	19.0%	23.8%	**38.1%**	7.1%	2.4%	11.9%
Q7	34	20.6%	11.8%	**38.2%**	11.8%	5.9%	11.8%
Q8	54	**75.9%**	7.4%	0%	3.7%	13.0	0%
Q9	39	**61.5%**	2.6%	7.7%	10.3%	17.9%	0%
Q9b	23	**56.5%**	0%	0%	30.5%	13.0%	0%

Table 1 reports the most recurring themes found among response data for each interview protocol question. The theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* was the most prevalent theme found in coded responses for Questions 1, 2, 2b, 3, 8, 9 and 9b. The theme of *Students and Families* was found most often in two questions: Questions 6 and 7. Of the responses to Question 4, responses pertaining to a *Consistent and Unified Staff* were most often provided by participating teacher informants. Response data that fell under the theme of *Reformed Practice* were found more often than data from the other themes in the responses to Question 5. The data stemming from the themes of *Pride and Efficacy* and *Testing* did not

appear the most in any of the 11 interview questions. As was revealed earlier in the chapter, several questions produced responses from participating teacher informants that did not align to some of the established themes.

The data collected in the study's interview protocol pointed to six major themes. Traces of those themes could be found across participating teacher informants' responses to nearly every interview protocol question. Additionally, theme-specific data appeared in varying volumes when analyzing the data collected from each individual interview protocol question.

Research Question Findings

In order to obtain a clear understanding of each theme across participants, it is essential to further explore these responses. The interview protocol questions were developed to reflect each key aspect of the study's conceptual framework. These key aspects include behaviorist presence of operant conditioning, current educational accountability policy, teacher motivation through the lens of the Expectancy Theory, and teacher morale.

Findings for research question 1.

The study's first research question sought to reveal how current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' general motivation in low-performing Priority Schools. Question 1, Question 2 and Question 2b of the interview protocol were utilized to obtain qualitative data to support an answer to this question. When the data collected from these questions had been analyzed, the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* emerged more often than any of the other major themes.

Teachers' perspectives to Question 1 of the interview protocol produced a trend of responses that pointed to the various perceptions of negative intrinsic and extrinsic effects they experienced while working in a Priority School. For example, teachers shared how their

emotional state declined during this time. They had to approach their work fearful and "drained," which they had not been accustomed to before working in a Priority School. This started as early as the time when teachers learned that their school had become a Priority School. Supporting this, one teacher said, "I remember the day...we found out we were a Priority School and I cried, and I cried my whole way home, and cried for a couple of days" (Participant 11, March 24, 3018). Teachers shared feelings of fear and paranoia while working in a Priority School (Participant 1, March 23, 2018; Participant 2, March 23, 2018; Participant 7, March 14, 2018; Participant 9, May 17, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018). The idea of teachers working in fear, while feeling emotionally drained posed significant obstacles to upholding high levels of motivation in the Priority School setting.

Additionally, teachers' responses to Question 1 described an increased workload while their school was labeled as a Priority School. For example, one teacher pointed out that while working in a Priority School, "there's more placed upon us, more things that they want us to do" (Participant 3, March 23, 2018). Another teacher shared that in a Priority School, "you're always trying to keep up, doing more for the kids" (Participant 14, June 14, 2018). These comments pertaining to an increase in the amount of work imposed onto Priority School teachers also suggested a negative impact on their motivation.

As was the case for Question 1, the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* was more prevalent than any other theme in the data collected from Question 2 of the interview protocol. One teacher suggested, "Yes, we experienced a tremendous change in our workplace" (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). All of the data found in the responses related to this theme revealed a consistency in teachers' feelings, supporting this perspective. In their responses, teachers shared the negative impacts they felt while teaching in a Priority School workplace.

One teacher described working in a Priority School as “more of...a hostile environment...more of a cutthroat sort of environment” (Participant 6, March 24, 2018). Responses also spoke to perceptions of unpleasant changes that Priority School teachers experienced. Some reported that teachers were treated poorly and were expected to do more work than ever before while working in a Priority School.

First, teachers discussed changes in the way they were treated while working in a Priority School. They felt less trusted as professionals in the classroom, based on the various instructional initiatives the school had to take on in response to being labeled as a Priority School. One teacher described these changes as “taking away...freedom to teach” (Participant 12, May 17, 2018). Other teachers supported this notion and felt that the school was more relaxed before Priority School status (Participant 5, March 23, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018). On top of feeling less trusted, teachers expressed changes in the pressure they felt was placed upon them at this time.

The data collected from Question 2 of the interview protocol also revealed that teachers felt more pressure to perform at a high level in their workplace while Priority School sanctions were present. One teacher said, “You can just feel the pressures with the teachers...because... there’s so much you have to learn” (Participant 14, June 14, 2018). Other participants’ responses reiterated this perception (Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018). These environmental factors existed throughout the Priority School period for these teachers. The workplace had changed due to the policy, and not for the better in their opinions.

Responses to this interview question also pointed to a heavier workload being required of teachers while working in a Priority School (Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 9, personal conversation, May 17, 2018; Participant 10, May 17, 2018). Describing the work of

implementing required Priority School initiatives, one teacher shared that "there's a lot of things that we have to do than other schools don't have to" (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). An increased workload, as well as teachers feeling distrusted and pressured, contributed to the negative impact felt by teachers in the Priority School workplace.

Question 2b of the interview protocol asked teachers of one of the two schools about the changes they experienced after Priority School status had ended. While the teachers of the school that was still labeled as a Priority School did not take part in this question, participating teacher informants' responses produced similar findings as those established in Question 2. When asked about workplace changes after Priority School status had ended, teachers again described feelings with a negative connotation, or the increased workload that was placed upon them as a result of being a Priority School.

Regarding their feelings, teachers provided insights suggesting they were impacted negatively by Priority School sanctions. Some of these responses pertained to the time while the school was labeled as a Priority School. Other responses reported a negative impact on teachers' feelings after Priority School status.

The workplace changes that occurred during Priority School status impacted teachers' confidence as well. One teacher described the return of a "little bit of confidence...that...had been stripped away from us" (Participant 11, May 17, 2018) after the Priority School status and sanctions had ended. This suggested that teachers' confidence had been taken away from them during Priority School status. Supporting this idea, a teacher described an absence of encouragement or validation for a job well-done during this time. This participant pointed out that teachers "really would love to have heard, 'Oh my God! Great job! You guys did a great job'" (Participant 2, March 23, 2018).

Teachers also reported a negative impact after Priority School status had ended. For example, one teacher described the elimination of the Priority School label in the school as "a little bit of a sigh of relief" (Participant 11, May 17, 2018). While this teacher felt slight relief from the stress that is felt by Priority School teachers, stress still lingered. Others felt no relief after the school eliminated its Priority School label. Comparing the amount of stress felt during Priority School status and after it ended, one teacher stated, "I feel our job is still as stressful as it was" (Participant 5, March 23, 2018). It is apparent that teachers' feelings were negatively impacted both during and after Priority School changes in the workplace.

Moreover, teachers' *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* responses to Question 2b of the interview protocol again pertained to the idea of an increased workload that still existed after Priority School status had ended " (Participant 2, March 23, 2018); Participant 11, May 17, 2018). One teacher offered a possible rationale for why their workload remained heavy after Priority School status had ended. This teacher said:

> And we don't know if it's because it's the way things should be, or if it's because we were a Priority School and now it's just…one more thing that we should be able to do, and this is how they're going to get us to do it. (Participant 2, March 23, 2018)

This response again confirmed the presence of a heavier workload for teachers, both during and after Priority School status.

Research Question 1 asked how current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' motivation in low-performing Priority Schools. This research question was answered in the findings from teachers' responses to Question 1, Question 2 and Question 2b in the study's interview protocol. Teachers' responses to these questions told of happier times before Priority School status had started. They reported a negative impact on the way that they

were treated during Priority School status. While being treated in a more negative manner than before, teachers also received a heavier workload while their school was labeled as a Priority School. This workload, the stress and pressure from the workplace changes remained for teachers whose school no longer had the label of a Priority School. As the behaviorist theory of Operant Conditioning would support, when the consequence of Priority School sanctions was present, they learned to react with feelings that are considered negative. This reaction was due to the requirements of the educational accountability policy infiltrating the work environment of the participating teacher informants. These findings suggest that the current educational accountability policy had an overall negative impact on teachers' motivation.

Findings for research question 2.

The goal of the study's second research question was to unearth a potential impact of the current educational accountability policy on the first of three key variables that contribute to the Expectancy Theory of motivation. This question was designed to elicit teachers' feelings on how these policy sanctions impact their expectancy related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School. This question was included to determine whether the policy reduced, increased or maintained teachers' belief that they could perform at the level needed to obtain enough improvement in student achievement outcomes, so that the school would be relinquished of its label as a Priority School. Question 3 of the interview protocol was written and asked of participating teacher informants in order to address this research question.

The analysis of the data collected from Question 3 of the study's interview protocol provided findings that spoke to teachers' beliefs that a certain level of work performance would result in the elimination of their school's Priority School label. The theme of *Diminished Quality*

of Professional Life was most prevalent among teachers' responses to the third interview question as well. The most recurring idea that was found within the theme-related responses pertained to the amount of effort needed from every staff member in a Priority School.

Overall, teachers shared a belief that every staff member had to put for the highest level of effort for the school to improve and to eliminate its Priority School status (Participant 4, March 23, 2018; Participant 5, March 23, 2018; Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 9, May 17, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018). Most of the teachers shared the idea that high effort was needed to make the necessary school performance improvements. One teacher provided a succinct summary of the idea. This Priority School teacher reported that "the effort has to be high in order to receive...the results you're looking for" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Several other participating teacher informants supported this idea, although many supported it through describing the amount of effort needed to be successful in a Priority School. For example, teachers associated the idea of teachers having to give maximum effort in this setting. While working in a Priority School, one teacher shared, "It was a lot of effort. One hundred percent effort, all the time" (Participant 5, March 23, 2018). Others agreed that teachers needed to give at least one hundred percent effort in the Priority School setting (Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 9, May 17, 2018). Teachers believed that only a high level of effort would lead to the school achieving its goal of eliminating its Priority School status. Furthermore, this effort had to be widespread throughout the school. One teacher felt that in order to achieve this goal, "Everybody has to be doing their part and we all had to be on-board and we all had to...carry our weight" (Participant 5, March 23, 2018). It was clear that teachers believed that only a high level of effort, given at all times, by all staff members in the school, would lead to the end of Priority School sanctions (Participant 4, March 23, 2018;

Participant 5, March 23, 2018; Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 9, May 17, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018).

Question 3 of the interview protocol produced data that supports an answer to the study's second research question. An overwhelming quantity of this question's response data supporting the most prevalent theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* Most of these responses spoke to a belief shared by teachers that high effort, given by everyone, would lead to the school working its way out of Priority School sanctions. Minimal theme-related data contradicted this belief. This data was provided by one teacher, who summarized her experiences in a Priority School by saying, "We've been asked to do more than what's human...it's inhumane on a certain level" (Participant 1, March 23, 2018). This perspective did not agree with that found in most responses to this question. This being the case, the data collected from this question suggests that current educational accountability policy sanctions had a positive impact on teachers' expectancy related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School.

Findings for research question 3.

The second key variable of the Expectancy Theory, teachers' valence, was the focus of the study's third research question. This question was included in the interview protocol in order to seek the policy's positive, negative, or nonexistent impact on teachers' value of increasing student achievement, which is the desired outcome for Priority Schools. Question 5, Question 6 and Question 7 of the interview protocol were asked of teachers in order to collect data that could support an answer to this research question.

The fifth question of the study's interview protocol asked participating teacher informants if they could describe a time when their students' performance improved. They were

also asked to refer to any specific sources of evidence that supported this improvement. The final aspect of this question asked teachers how the improved academic performance of students impacted them as Priority School teachers. After analyzing the data collected from the responses to this question, it was established that *Reformed Practice* appeared as the most recurring major theme. The theme-related data that were derived from this question pointed to two distinct aspects of the reformed practices that teachers took on while working in Priority Schools. The aspects were changes in both curriculum and in how teachers utilized student assessment data to inform instructional decision-making.

In much of the data that was collected from responses to Question 5 of the study's interview protocol, teachers shared how their instructional practices had changed due to new curricular advancements that were made in the school district, in response to Priority School sanctions. Referencing past instructional practices used in the classroom before the school's Priority School status, one teacher said, "I don't even want to look in my filing cabinets, at some of the things I used to teach…There was really some bad instruction going on" (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). Several other teachers focused on the positive impact caused by the new curricular initiatives the school had put in place in response to being labeled as a Priority School. For example, one teacher described the new-found knowledge that had been obtained through the Priority School response initiatives of common formative assessments and working on the school district's curriculum team, stating, "Oh my gosh…This is great" (Participant 2, March 23, 2018). Teachers also pointed out that new curricular programming led to improved student learning outcomes (Participant 8, March 24, 2018; Participant 11, May 17, 2018; Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Curricular changes in response to Priority School sanctions led to improved student learning outcomes, which in turn led to a positive impact on teachers.

Teachers' responses to Question 5 of the study's interview protocol pointed to an additional positive impact caused by Priority School sanctions. The schools' response to Priority School status led to a strengthening of teachers' abilities to analyze, interpret and use students' achievement data to drive instructional decision-making. One of the participants of the study summarized this idea by stating, "We have also been…tracking our data more, where before we were a Priority School, we didn't do the tracking of the data as much…it wasn't how intense we are doing it now" (Participant 3, March 23, 2018). This data tracking was found to have contained many facets. This Priority School response process was described as:

> Setting our standards, taking a standard and unwrapping it, and planning out how we were going to teach that…creating those assessments and looking at each assessment with that…depth of knowledge lens, and then doing those formative checks along the way to check on the kids and see how they were doing…that's where I feel like I saw that improvement. (Participant 4, March 23, 2018)

Another teacher affirmed improvement in student learning outcomes when their academic achievement data is tracked and used to inform teachers of instructional next steps. This teacher stated, "we have…progress monitoring meetings where we look at data…we are seeing some growth…during those…meetings" (Participant 7, March 24, 2018). Finally, a teacher suggested how the data is used to improve teaching and learning by sharing how students are brought into this process. This teacher said:

> We do a better job at having the kids understand the scores and how to improve…not just sitting down and going, 'You know what? Read the test and do it.' Now it goes back to pinpointing a few strategies and using those strategies buildingwide. (Participant 12, May 17, 2018)

Furthermore, teachers' strengthened competence to analyze, interpret and use student achievement data to inform instructional practices was also found to be a positive impact of the Priority School sanctions imposed onto these schools.

The study's fifth interview protocol question revealed that teachers associated a positive response with initiatives and professional growth activities that supported improved student learning outcomes. This finding made another positive impact apparent. There was a positive impact felt by teachers in how they valued improved student performance outcomes while working in a Priority School. This meant that their valence was positively impacted by Priority School sanctions. The next two questions of the interview protocol would shift gears by focusing on when students' learning did not progress.

Question 6 of the interview protocol asked teachers for information that was similar to Question 5, though from a different context. Rather than focusing on when student performance *improved*, this question pertained to times when students' performance *stagnated*. As was pointed out in the findings of Question 5 of the interview protocol, *teacher*-driven processes related to their *Reformed Practice* were connected to *improving* students' academic achievement. When the topic of questioning shifted from improved student performance to stagnating performance, there was also a shift in the presence of the most prevalent major theme that was found in teachers' responses. Question 6 found to have collected more coded data supporting the theme of *Students and Families* than any of the other established major themes. The theme-supporting data collected from this question spoke to several disadvantages that students face that cause obstacles to learning. In their responses to the next interview question, teachers shared how they were impacted when students' academic achievement stagnated.

Perspectives from several teachers that identified the disadvantages faced by their Priority School students as the culprit of stagnating achievement were found in the bulk of the coded data supporting the major theme of *Students and Families* taken from teachers' responses to Question 6 of the study's interview protocol. For most of the teachers, these disadvantages spoke to a subsequent frustrating experience produced from stagnating student performance. One teacher's conclusion drawn from this frustration included a defeatist attitude toward Priority School student learners. This teacher said, "I think that there's just some that you're not going to reach…you know, no matter what you do" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). No other participating teacher informants suggested such an opinion, though several others expressed frustrations by identifying these perceived student disadvantages. These disadvantages included students not having or losing the motivation to learn, lacking prerequisite skills to support grade level content mastery and dealing with traumatic experiences outside of the school setting.

First, teachers pointed to a lack of student motivation as a contributing factor to stagnating academic performance. One teacher provided this perspective in a very direct fashion, stating, "I think there's times when they're not motivated to learn" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). This perceived lack of student motivation was suggested to have stemmed from several sources by participating teacher informants.

One of the teacher-perceived factors contributing to students lacking motivation to improve upon their academic achievement was students' boredom with the current content. One of the participating teacher informants reported that:

> We have some students…they're in these programs…we've done the screener, and used the placement testing and we feel that it is certainly the best fit for them, and they start off, and they're doing fine, and then there's a drop. (Participant 7, March 24, 2018)

Addressing this type of stagnation, the other teacher tried to provide ideas as to why this might happen. The teacher said, “They get bored when they’re not learning anymore…either they already know it, or can’t do it, and they just get bored with it” (Participant 14, June 14, 2018). Both perspectives point to boredom occurring when students do not adjust to the content and how teachers were providing instruction in the classroom. Neither suggested changes made in instructional practice to maintain high levels of student engagement.

Other factors contributing to students lacking the motivation to improve upon their academic performance were provided by teachers as well. One of these factors was the perception of students’ inability to connect current learning opportunities to their future aspirations. One teacher’s response to Question 6 of the interview protocol included, “they (students) don’t understand the impact of what they’re learning today is going to change their future” (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). No data was collected that spoke to what had or could be done to address this perceived disconnect. While describing a factor contributing to low student achievement, a teacher pointed to the changing demographics of the families who lived within the boundaries of the school district. The district, which had once serviced a predominantly middle-class society, had shifted to serving a majority of families that were considered as economically disadvantaged. This drastic change took place while several of the participating teacher informants were employed with their school district. Referencing this shift, the teacher said, “There is a different family culture in that…(the) working poor culture wants to get their kids educated, but they don’t understand the how of it” (Participant 1, March 23, 2018).

Teachers provided several other reasons why their students appeared to have low motivation to improve upon their academic performance. One common thread that all these reasons shared was that students lacked the motivation to make significant improvements to their

academic achievement due to various perceived student deficiencies identified by teachers. Along with low student motivation, other circumstances were identified by teachers when asked about what they thought might have caused student achievement to stagnate.

Participating teacher informants provided several responses pertaining to students lacking the prerequisite or prior grade levels' skills to support their proficiency or mastery of current grade level content as well. One teacher's response to Question 6 of the interview protocol told of the frustration felt when students started the year without knowing basic multiplication facts. The frustration came to the forefront when the teacher said, "They (students) don't know their facts at all. They have no number sense. That was really hard…they don't understand…real simple things" (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). A second teacher echoed this frustration. This teacher reported a similar experience of students starting the year well below grade level. Referring to students who come into the classroom performing several grade levels below their current placement, this teacher said, "You're kind of getting them right around third grade…that's a place where…emotionally, mentally…that's a hard job to get them from say around a third grade level into fourth or fifth" (Participant 1, March 23, 2018). This teacher felt that students who entered the school year performing below grade level was a barrier that resulted in stagnating student performance.

Finally, teachers discussed the trauma that many of their students face outside of the school setting that impeded to their inability to improve their academic performance. This included issues with a transient student population and other issues in the home that cause trauma to students. Addressing the impact of transience on students' academic achievement, one teacher said:

> One year…we saw how many kids start the year, and end the year. It was less than fifty percent of the kids that started in September…and a lot of our kids don't come to us from our feeder schools. So it was, that was very difficult, and it still is. (Participant 8, March 24, 2018)

This teacher felt that students moving in and out of school districts caused a traumatic experience that impacted their ability to improve academically. Traumatic experiences of Priority School students was also pointed out by a different teacher. This teacher said:

> There's times when they (students) have a lot of trauma in their life that prevents them from being able to focus in on their education…and unfortunately...their family's circumstances, or their home life or their trauma that they've already been through, prevents them from being successful to the point that pulls us out of being a Priority School. (Participant 13, June 5, 2018)

As was the case with the other rationales for stagnating student performance offered by teachers, this response portrayed a very grim portrayal of some of the significant challenges that contributed to such stagnation. Other data extracted from the responses to Question 6 pointed to the impact of stagnating student performance on teachers.

Furthermore, responses to Question 6 of the interview protocol pointed to stagnating student performance leading to teacher frustration. For example, one teacher discussed a time when several major assessments were taking place in the school at the same time. These tests included the Michigan's statewide assessment, the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP), as well as the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. These assessments were taken by all students in the school, during overlapping time periods, toward the end of the school year. Both assessments

had major significance to teachers. The M-STEP was the primary evaluation protocol used to determine schools' placement onto the Priority School list. NWEA's MAP assessments were the primary assessment tool that fed into teachers' annual performance evaluations in the school district. Describing these circumstances, the teacher stated:

> Those students would come to me and, they were fried. They said, "I just, I don't care anymore," "this is too much," and it broke my heart. And I knew that it was too much, and you could see that they were fried, and their behavior was changing, and testing stations, even if we had the smaller group, it was just, it was too much. (Participant 6, March 24, 2018)

Like the heartbreak that was felt by this teacher, teachers were overwhelmed and frustrated with the number of students who were entering the classroom below grade level each year. These feelings resulted from the expectation of teachers in the school still having to produce significant academic improvements with an increasing number of students who had gaps in learning from skills assigned to previous grade levels. Priority School teachers were expected to address these learning gaps, as well as the current grade level content. Describing this circumstance, a teacher said:

> And now you're doing everything, you know, loops to try to get…the whole twenty-eight kids out of my class to kind of get a third and a fourth and…it's everybody, as opposed to a couple of kids. So that, I guess brings it back to why things are more stagnant. (Participant 1, March 23, 2018)

These statements suggested negative feelings such as heartbreak, frustration and being overwhelmed. However, these negative feelings reinforced the high value these Priority School teachers placed onto improved student learning outcomes.

Teachers' responses to Question 6 pointed to issues pertaining to *Students and Families* as the main contributing reasons why students' performance stagnates. According to the data collected from this question, teachers attributed stagnation to low student motivation, students' lack of prerequisite skills, or the trauma that students faced at home or elsewhere outside of the school setting, as well as through their interactions with family members or peers. When student achievement stagnated, teachers became frustrated. However, this frustration revealed the value teachers placed on improving student performance, which is the goal of any Priority School. Findings of no emotional response, or more positive feelings about stagnating student performance would suggest a negative impact on Priority School teachers' valence. Like Question 5, the data collected from Question 6 of the study's interview protocol revealed that teachers highly valued improved student achievement while working in a Priority School. This suggested that the policy had a positive impact on Priority School teachers' valence. The first two of three questions that were designed to answer Research Question 3 of the study pointed to a similar finding. What remains in finalizing this answer is whether Question 7 of the interview protocol shared a similar finding as the two preceding questions.

Following a similar layout to Question 5 and Question 6 of the study's interview protocol, Question 7 sought to unearth the information pertaining to teachers' experiences when students' performance *declined*. In contrast to the data collected from Question 5, but like the data collected from Question 6, the most prevalent theme found in the data drawn from Question 7 was *Students and Families.* The theme-supporting data collected from this question pertained to the perceived causes of declining student performance, or to the feelings of frustration felt by teachers when student performance declined.

The most recurring theme-related responses to interview protocol Question 7 pertained to reasons why students' academic achievement declined in the Priority School setting. The only recurring factors that teachers felt contributed to declining student performance were student misbehavior and test fatigue.

Teachers felt that student misbehavior influenced declining student performance. Describing when students' academic achievement declined, one teacher stated, "I don't think that I've seen huge (decline), unless it was impacted by…a ten-day suspension, or like missing instruction" (Participant 12, May 17, 2018). Other teachers reiterated the idea that behaviors such as student misconduct and laziness contributed to declines in student achievement (Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018). Some teachers saw student behavior as the main contributing factor to declining student performance. However, others pointed to the number of tests that students are asked to take as the main cause leading to students' declining performance.

Teachers also suggested the idea of students becoming fatigued and unmotivated when they are tested too often when answering Question 7 of the study's interview protocol. One teacher described the overlapping assessments that students took at the end of the year impacting their ability to perform at a high level. "They are…tested out," (Participant 9, May 17, 2018) the teacher said. A teacher from the other school provided similar insights. This teacher stated, "Where I would see decline, particularly last year…was in test fatigue" (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). Other teachers suggested a range of additional factors that were perceived to have contributed to declining student performance. These factors included many that were described in teachers' responses to Question 6, including a lack of student motivation, student transience,

trauma experienced by students and others. Unlike these ideas though, these remaining factors were only suggested in a single occurrence.

Like the response data from Question 6, the theme-supporting data that was derived from interview protocol Question 7 suggested a frustration felt by teachers when students' academic performance declined. This frustration was felt by both teachers of the elementary school and middle school Priority School settings. Teachers reported feeling helpless and blamed for poor student achievement outcomes.

Two major factors contributed to teachers' frustration. These factors included feelings of helplessness or blame (Participant 1, personal communication March 23, 2018; Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 10, May 17, 2018). One teacher discussed frustration occurring from feelings of helplessness. Regarding declining student performance, this teacher said, "It impacts me because…sometimes I just don't know what more we can possibly do with what we have" (Participant 6, March 24, 2018). Another teacher reported feeling blamed for declining student performance when responding to this interview protocol question. This teacher shared an experience when external support specialists made assertions about what teachers in the Priority School setting were not doing. These support specialists were assigned to work in tandem with the school district to train, observe and coach teachers on their implementation of their school's Priority School reform initiatives. This teacher stated, "The year…when we were told that we were in Priority (School status)…the (external support specialists) came through with, you know, forty kids in a classroom, saying, 'Oh you're not teaching curriculum' over whatever we were doing wrong" (Participant 1, March 23, 2018). It was clear that this teacher's frustration resulted from both having a large class size of students to teach, along with being blamed for not teaching

the established district curriculum. The consistent message extracted from these responses was that teachers felt frustration when student achievement declined in their Priority School.

Students and Families responses to the seventh interview question were similar to those collected from the preceding question. The data drawn from Question 7 included teachers' perceptions of what factors caused student achievement to decline, and the frustration that they felt when this decline was realized. Again, as was the case in Question 6, teachers' shared sense of frustration when student performance declined served as evidence of the value they associate with improving student performance. Since improved student performance is the overall goal of Priority Schools, it is reasonable to say that the data produced from interview protocol Question 7 supplemented the evidence of a positive impact of Priority School sanctions on teachers' valence.

Research Question 3 sought to identify an impact of the current educational accountability policy on teachers' valence, or value of their Priority School's desired outcome of increasing student achievement. The three interview protocol questions that were designed to collect data to contribute to answering this question, Question 5, Question 6 and Question 7, accomplished this task. When teachers were asked about improved student learning outcomes, responses pointed to *Reformed Practice,* or the work that the *teachers* were doing to address the recent trends of low student performance. When asked about stagnating or declining student performance, responses were more suggestive of issues related to *Students and Families*, and the frustrations they felt when student achievement did not improve. Teachers reported positive findings related to what was asked of them and how they responded when student performance improved. When student performance stagnated or declined, teachers pointed to a series of student-centric reasons as to why their performance did not improve. Additionally, their feelings

of frustration when student performance stagnated or declined suggested the value they place on improving student achievement outcomes. When considering the data found in the most prevalent themes collected from teachers' responses to Question 5, Question 6 and Question 7 of the study's interview protocol, it is evident that an answer to the study's third research question emerged. Current educational accountability policy sanctions have a positive impact on teachers' valence related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School.

Findings for research question 4.

The intent of the study's fourth research question was to discover if the current educational accountability policy impacts teachers' instrumentality, the final key variable of the Expectancy Theory. In order to answer this research question, Question 4 of the interview protocol was asked of participating teacher informants. This question asked participating Priority School teacher informants how they would describe the type of work performance that is needed in order to eliminate the school's Priority School label. The data collected from this interview protocol question most often reflected the major theme of a *Consistent and Unified Staff*. The raw data collected within this theme pointed to an impact of the policy on teachers' way of thinking about their work in the Priority School setting. This impact was summarized by the response of one participating teacher informant, who said, "It's a mindset shift" (Participant 4, March 23, 2018). This mindset shift needed among Priority School teachers pertained to teachers sharing a common understanding about what it takes to be successful in a Priority School. According to the data collected, the key to this success is in how teachers collaborate in the Priority School.

Participating teacher informants discussed the shifting mindset manifested in how teachers collaborate to accomplish tasks in the Priority School. The collaboration was described through a variety of lenses by Priority School teachers. One teacher responded to interview protocol Question 4 by sharing the general communication that needs to exist for successful Priority School work performance. This teacher stated, "One thing… (that) has to happen is...a lot of communication between staff" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Several teachers described this communication with the new teacher collaboration processes that had been put in place in order to make decisions about curriculum and instructional practices in the Priority School. One teacher spoke to this collaboration at the school level, describing a change in the leadership structure in the school. Describing the school's new approach to distributing leadership as an improvement, this teacher stated, "Having a BTN (school leadership team) where you had not just one or two people…trying to affect change, you now have a group" (Participant 7, March 24, 2018). The school's leadership structure and function were perceived as more isolated and non-inclusive of staff input in decision making before Priority School status. At a more local level, participants shared how this collaboration needs to exist among classroom teachers in the Priority School. One teacher referenced the shift to more collaboration in the context of the Professional Learning Community model that the school had put in place in the Priority School. Describing this process, the teacher said, "The collaborative structures that we have in place…are definitely key to helping us dig out of this" (Participant 9, March 24, 2018). Others supported the importance of collaboration in improving the overall performance of the school (Participant 4, March 24, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018). It was clear that communication through teacher collaborative practices was necessary in order to obtain the type of work performance needed for success in the Priority School. Teachers across both schools recognized

this and shared how their schools' staff members have lived into mindset shift in the Priority School setting.

When looking at the data collected from Question 4 of the study's interview protocol, teachers provided insights to the need for a collective staff mindset shift that requires effective collaboration and communication between them in the Priority School setting. Teachers felt that *everyone* in the Priority School needed to share this mindset (Participant 4, March 23, 2018; Participant 8, March 24, 2018). The responses to Question 4 of the interview protocol suggested that Priority School sanctions had impacted teachers in a way that required a change in their collective mindset, shifting away from working in isolation, and toward a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning. Teachers often shared that the more collaborative approach was essential to improved learning outcomes for students in the Priority School. The educational accountability policy shifted teachers' work performance to include more effective practices that supported improved student learning outcomes. This suggested that the educational accountability policy had an overall positive impact on Priority School teachers' instrumentality.

Findings for research question 5.

The study's final research question focused on whether the current educational accountability policy had a positive, negative, or absent impact on teachers' morale. Specifically, this question set out to understand if teachers' feelings and attitudes toward their workplace improved, declined, or remained the same while their school held the Priority School label. The objective of Question 8, Question 9 and Question 9b of the interview protocol was to collect data that suggested whether the policy produced a positive, negative or no impact on teachers' morale based on the Behaviorist theory of Operant Conditioning. These questions asked teachers to describe their general feelings or attitudes about their school, or the climate of

the school before (Question 8), during (Question 9) and after (Question 9b) their school was labeled as a Priority School. Question 9b was only asked of the participating teacher informants whose school had recently eliminated its Priority School label. An analysis of the coded data that was collected from these final three interview protocol questions revealed that the most prevalent major theme represented within them was a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* The answer to Research Question 5 was supported by gaining a deeper understanding of teachers' feelings and attitudes toward their school at both the times when they were and weren't exposed to Priority School sanctions.

Question 8 of the study's interview protocol focused on teachers' morale during the time before their school had Priority School sanctions imposed onto it. As was stated before, the most prevalent of the six major themes reflected in teachers' responses to this question was a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* The raw data from interview protocol Question 8 that fed into this theme pointed to three distinct feelings Priority School teachers experienced. Even though this question pertained to the time *before* the Priority School sanctions were imposed onto the school, teachers felt compelled to report the stress they felt by working in a Priority School. The analysis of this data showed that teachers felt happier with their workplace before Priority School status as well. Both findings point to a similar impact of the current educational accountability policy on teachers' morale.

Most of the *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data collected from teacher responses to interview protocol Question 8 suggested teachers' increased stress levels due to their schools' Priority School status. Most of this data pertained to when the school was labeled as a Priority School. However, some of the data described the time approaching Priority School

status, and how their morale was impacted while anticipating this label. For example, one teacher described this stress before Priority School status by stating:

> I remember we were told before we became a Priority School that we wouldn't like it because 'You're not going to like how much work you're going to have to do, how much extra stuff you have to do, it's not going to be as much fun anymore,' and that was true. (Participant 14, June 14, 2018)

Other teachers' responses pointed to the stress felt shortly before, and while learning that their school had been identified as a Priority School. One teacher said, "We kind of knew it was going to be really bad" (Participant 8, March 24, 2018). Also, a teacher spoke about the experience of being informed that the school had been identified as a Priority School. This teacher reported, "There was almost like a depression…that kind of came over the school when we found out we were a Priority School" (Participant 5, March 23, 2018). These responses indicated that teachers experienced increased stress levels at this time.

While answering Question 8 of the interview protocol, teachers described how their stress level increased while Priority School sanctions were imposed onto the school. Teachers described a variety of negative feelings and attitudes that they had while working in a Priority School. Teachers described these feelings as "overwhelming" (Participant 3, March 23, 2018), "pressure" (Participant 6, March 24, 2018) "tension that…a lot of people can't handle…more stress…more pressure" (Participant 8, May 17, 2018), "a lot more pressure" (Participant 14, June 14, 2018), "really hard" (Participant 5, March 23, 2018), "blamed for…students who weren't doing well" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018) and "stressful" (Participant 9, May 17, 2018). Other *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data collected from this interview protocol question

reinforced these feelings. These stress-related responses suggest that teacher morale was negatively impacted when Priority School sanctions had been imposed onto the school.

When responding to Question 8, teachers also reported feeling happier with their workplace before it was a Priority School (Participant 2, March 23, 2018; Participant 5, March 23, 2018; Participant 10, May 17, 2018; Participant 13, June 5, 2018; Participant 14, June 14, 2018). When teachers' responses focused on how they felt about their school before it held the label of a Priority School, they spoke of times that were much more positive. One teacher summarized this perception by stating, "There was an overall happier feeling in the buildings" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). While these teachers consistently reported feeling happier before Priority School status, other teacher responses pointed to a reduced stress level during this time.

Teachers also felt less stressed by their school before it became a Priority School. One teacher described teachers' morale before their school became a Priority School as "more positive and less stressed" (Participant 12, May 17, 2018). Others supported this perception (Participant 6, March 24, 2018; Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Reinforcing the first finding of this interview protocol question, this data suggests that teachers felt less stress and pressure from their school before it was a Priority School, and more when Priority School sanctions were present.

Question 8 of the study's interview protocol led to teachers sharing that they felt more stress during Priority School status. Their responses suggested that teachers were much happier and felt less stress before the presence of Priority School sanctions. These findings suggest that Priority School sanctions had a negative impact on teachers' feelings and attitudes toward their school. This being the case, teachers' responses to Question 8 of the interview protocol support that the presence of Priority School sanctions had a negative impact on their morale. The

interview protocol then shifted to teacher's morale while their school was considered a Priority School.

Question 9 of the study's interview protocol focused on teachers' morale once Priority School sanctions had been imposed onto their schools. This question was designed to either affirm any findings from interview protocol Question 8, or to establish any new findings regarding teachers' attitudes and feelings toward their school during this time. This question ended up accomplishing both objectives. As was stated before, the most prevalent of the six major themes found in the response data to this question was a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* Reflecting this theme, one teacher described teachers' morale inside of a Priority School by saying, "It's just negative" (Participant 1, March 23, 2018). The overwhelming majority of teachers' responses to this question suggested the stress they felt about working in their school when Priority School sanctions were present. Additionally, a significant amount of the *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data reflected teachers' feelings of fear or doubt caused by their Priority School.

The largest portion of *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data found in the responses to interview protocol Question 9 unearthed a heightened level of stress felt by teachers once their school became a Priority School. Most of the teachers who took part in the interview protocol shared this impact. This perhaps was made most evident by the response of one teacher, who said of working in a Priority School, "There is a lot of pressure…there's a lot of blame…it's a thankless job" (Participant 13, June 5, 2018). Some teachers discussed similar negativity even in the earliest days of working in a Priority School. After being told that the school had been put onto the Priority School list, one teacher shared, "That was a beat-down. That was a real beat-down…there were tears. Multiple people at home that night, on the phone, talking to each other

and crying" (Participant 11, May 17, 2018). Teachers also discussed the day-to-day stress of working in a school with Priority School sanctions imposed onto it (Participant 2, March 23, 2018; Participant 9, June 5, 2018; Participant 13, June 5, 2018). The stress felt by teachers led to a climate shift in the schools that took place from the time preceding Priority School status to when these sanctions were in place. Speaking to this climate shift, one teacher stated, "People just seem more uptight and not as relaxed" (Participant 14, June 14, 2018). Most of the teachers who were interviewed felt this way. It was apparent that they experienced a negative attitude and feeling impact of additional teacher stress when Priority School sanctions were present in their workplace. However, added stress was not the only negative feeling that teachers discussed when responding to Question 9 of the study's interview protocol.

Most of the remaining *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data collected from teachers' responses to interview protocol Question 9 pertained to teachers' feelings of fear or doubt caused by working in a school under Priority School sanctions. Based on their responses, the Priority School experience instilled a fear into teachers that they had not felt before. This fear came from the possibility of their schools being closed, as well as the increased teacher monitoring practices that had been put in place (Participant 1, March 23, 2018; Participant 2, March 23, 2018; Participant 5, March 23, 2018). In addition to feeling fearful, teachers also experienced feelings of doubt.

Teachers provided several responses that revealed the self-doubt they were made to feel while working in a Priority School. One teacher described the impact of Priority School sanctions on teachers' morale by saying, "You start to question, 'Is this where I belong...Did I make the right decision…to become a teacher'" (Participant 11, May 17, 2018)? Other teachers agreed that they felt doubt about themselves and their ability as teachers (Participant 5, March

23, 2018; Participant 13, June 5, 2018). The self-doubt that was caused by working in a school with Priority School sanctions suggested another negative impact on teachers' morale, caused by the educational accountability policy.

Question 9 of the study's interview protocol established changes in teachers' feelings and attitudes about their workplace once Priority School sanctions had started. Teachers' feelings of increased stress, fear and self-doubt were evidence of this change. As was the case in the findings of Question 8, Question 9 of the interview protocol pointed to a negative impact on these teachers' morale caused by the current educational accountability policy. This left only the data drawn from Question 9b to complete the findings regarding the study's fifth research question.

Question 9b of the study's interview protocol was only asked to teachers from the school that had been released of its status as a Priority School. This question's purpose was to collect a description of their feelings and attitudes toward their school after Priority School sanctions had ended. A smaller quantity of data was collected from this question, since it was asked to fewer teachers than most of the other interview protocol questions. This being the case, the data that was collected again reflected the major theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* more so than any of the other established major themes. Most of the data that pertained to this theme found in teachers' responses to Question 9b of the interview protocol pointed to lingering negative feelings and attitudes about their school after Priority School sanctions had ended.

Most of the data reflecting the most prevalent theme found in the responses to interview protocol Question 9b suggested a variety of negative feelings that teachers had toward their school after Priority School status had ended. Included among these reported feelings were anger, fear, paranoia and disappointment after the school had eliminated its label as a Priority

School (Participant 1, March 23, 2018; Participant 4, March 23, 2018; Participant 5, March 23, 2018; Participant 11, May 17, 2018). These negative feelings experienced by teachers after Priority School status had ended were summarized by one teacher, who said, "Do we still have the effects of it? Sure…It's like a scar that doesn't go away" (Participant 11, May 17, 2018). Responses such as this indicated a lingering negative impact of Priority School sanctions on teachers' morale, even after these sanctions had ended.

Most of the *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* data collected from teachers' responses to interview protocol Question 9b pointed to several negative feelings that have lingered within teachers after accomplishing the Priority School goal of making satisfactory improvements in student achievement. Since these feelings were so overwhelmingly represented within this data, it is reasonable to ascertain that Priority School sanctions have a negative impact on teachers' morale, even after they are no longer imposed onto the school.

The analysis of the data collected from the Question 8, Question 9 and Question 9b of the study's interview protocol questions was suggestive of a consistent answer to Research Question 5 of the study. The data extracted from all three of these interview protocol questions indicated that the current educational accountability policy had a negative impact on teachers' morale in these schools.

Comparison of Each School's Theme-Related Data

It was important to compare the data collected in this study from teachers of both schools. A study's findings are strengthened when they expand beyond a single case or setting (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Major themes derived from the interview protocol data collected in this study were identified and described in terms of their relevance to each of the study's research questions in the previous sections of this chapter. Comparing the data collected across schools

supports the measures of validity embedded within this study. The specific goal of this secondary analysis is to establish confirmability of the general findings found among all participating teacher informants. However, this section will also address any areas where a school's theme-related data does *not* reflect the general findings and provide any explanations as to why the data did not do so. Theme-related coded data were analyzed for each individual school, reflecting responses from nine of the eleven interview protocol questions. Teachers' responses to Question 2b and Question 9b were not involved in the comparison, as these questions were only asked of teachers from the school that had been released of its status as a Priority School.

Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed to the use of numeric data to support the findings of qualitative studies. Six of the nine interview protocol questions produced the same most recurring theme found across responses from teachers of both schools. This was the case for teachers of both schools. Table 2 reflects the comparative numeric data that was used to support this analysis. The percentages of theme-related response data that appear in bold reflect the greatest recurrence of each major theme from participants at the elementary school (ES), middle school (MS) and the two schools combined.

Table 2

Individual and Combined School Interview Protocol Data with Common Most Recurring Major Theme

Interview Question	Research Question Alignment	Total Codes - Both Schools (n)	School	Percent of Each Question's Theme-Related Codes (Rounded to the Nearest 0.1%)					
				Theme 1: DQoPL	*Theme 2: RP*	*Theme 3: S&F*	*Theme 4: P&E*	*Theme 5: C&US*	*Theme 6: T*
Q1	RQ1	60	**ES**	**51.7%**	13.8%	3.4%	27.6%	3.4%	0.0%
			MS	**58.3%**	23.5%	5.9%	17.6%	11.8%	0.0%
			Combined	**45.0%**	20.0%	6.7%	20.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Q3	RQ2	30	**ES**	**40.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	**40.0%**	20.0%	0.0%
			MS	**50.0%**	5.0%	15.0%	10.0%	20.0%	0.0%
			Combined	**43.3%**	6.7%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Q4	RQ4	30	**ES**	9.1%	27.2%	18.1%	9.1%	**36.3%**	0.0%
			MS	27.8%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	**38.9%**	0.0%
			Combined	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	3.3%	**36.7%**	0.0%
Q6	RQ3	42	**ES**	7.1%	21.4%	**35.7%**	14.3%	0.0%	21.4%
			MS	25.9%	25.9%	**40.7%**	3.7%	3.7%	0.0%
			Combined	19.0%	23.8%	**38.1%**	7.1%	2.4%	11.9%
Q8	RQ5	54	**ES**	**58.8%**	17.6%	0.0%	0.0%	23.5%	0.0%
			MS	**83.8%**	2.7%	0.0%	5.4%	8.1%	0.0%
			Combined	**75.9%**	7.4%	0.0%	3.7%	13.0	0.0%
Q9	RQ5	39	**ES**	**66.7%**	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	13.3%	0.0%
			MS	**63.6%**	4.5%	13.6%	4.5%	13.6%	0.0%
			Combined	**61.5%**	2.6%	7.7%	10.3%	17.9%	0.0%

Teachers in both school settings provided more coded data specific to the theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* than any of the other five major themes when providing responses to Question 1, Question 3, Question 8 and Question 9 of the interview protocol. This was the most prevalent theme found within the data collected from these interview protocol questions when combining the responses of all teachers who took part in the study. When answering interview protocol Question 3, the teachers from the elementary school provided the same amount of responses supporting the themes of a *Diminished Quality of Life* and *Pride and Efficacy*. This tie made both the highest recurring themes found for this interview protocol question. Teachers also provided more response data aligned with a similar major theme when responding to Question 4 of the interview protocol. The most recurring major theme found in

this data was a *Consistent and Unified Staff*. Additionally, this theme appeared more consistently than any of the other major themes when the data collected from both schools was combined. The final interview protocol question that led to consistency in the most common theme-related response data was Question 6. Teachers' responses to this question produced more theme-related data pertaining to *Students and Families* in both school settings, as well as when their data was combined, than any other established major theme. The consistency in the highest-frequency theme-related data teachers provided to each of these interview protocol questions demonstrated the confirmability of this aspect of the study.

Three of the interview protocol questions led to teacher responses that were either not consistent from one school to another, or when comparing a school to the combined recurrence data. This data is reflected in Table 3. Again, the most recurring theme-related response data percentages are found in bold in this table.

Table 3

Individual and Combined School Interview Protocol Data with Inconsistent Most Recurring Major Themes

Interview Question	Research Question Alignment	Total Codes - Both Schools (n)	School	Percent of Each Question's Theme-Related Codes (Rounded to the Nearest 0.1%)					
				Theme 1: DQoPL	*Theme 2: RP*	*Theme 3: S&F*	*Theme 4: P&E*	*Theme 5: C&US*	*Theme 6: T*
Q2	RQ1	43	**ES**	2.1%	**42.1%**	15.8%	0.0%	21.1%	0.0%
			MS	**60.0%**	16.0%	8.0%	4.0%	8.0%	4.0%
			Combined	**44.2%**	25.6%	11.6%	2.3%	14.0%	2.3%
Q5	RQ3	53	**ES**	14.2%	**28.6%**	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	**28.6%**
			MS	0.0%	33.3%	**35.9%**	25.6%	2.6%	2.6%
			Combined	3.8%	**32.1%**	30.2%	22.6%	1.9%	9.4%
Q7	RQ3	34	**ES**	**25.0%**	8.3%	16.7%	**25.0%**	8.3%	16.7%
			MS	22.7%	13.6%	**45.5%**	4.5%	4.5%	9.1%
			Combined	20.6	11.8%	**38.2%**	11.8%	5.9%	11.8%

Question 2 of the interview protocol produced a similar most recurring major theme when accounting for the responses of the middle school teachers and those of the teachers from both schools combined. This data supported the major theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life.* However, the elementary school teachers' responses mostly pertained to the theme of *Reformed Practice.* The elementary teachers, who worked in a school that had overcome its Priority School label, tended to focus more on describing the work that was needed in order to succeed in their responses to this question. Meanwhile, the middle school teachers saw less optimism in their reform initiatives. These teachers continued to work in a school with a Priority School label when the study was carried out. The overwhelming majority of their responses pertained to a negative impact on the quality of their professional life. Also, Question 5 of the interview protocol led to inconsistency with the most recurring themes between the

responses of teachers from each school. Teachers from the elementary school provided responses that were most reflective of *Reformed Practice* and *Testing. Reformed Practice* was the most regular occurring theme found when combining the responses from teachers of both schools as well. However, the middle school teachers' responses to this question most often reflected the theme of *Students and Families*. The response trends differed between the Priority School and the school previously released of its Priority School label when the topic of discussion was on improving student performance. Finally, the data collected from interview protocol Question 7 led to another inconsistency in the most common theme reflected from teacher responses from each school. The theme of *Students and Families* was most common in the responses of the middle school teachers, as well as within the combined responses of both schools. In contrast, the themes of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* and *Pride and Efficacy* were most prevalent in the elementary school teachers' responses to this question. This question, as was the case with the others, showed a variance in perspectives among those who continue to work in a Priority School, and those who were no longer exposed to this environmental factor in their workplace.

Most of the questions on the interview protocol led to responses that reflected a similar theme from teachers of both schools. Moreover, the interview protocol questions that received consistency in the most commonly recurring themes among teachers' responses reflected each of the study's five research questions. This being the case, the findings described in this chapter were validated through the cross-case analysis.

Achievement of Qualitative Descriptive Study Principles

In the second chapter of this work, several principles of a qualitative descriptive study were established. Additionally, the chapter provided support for why a qualitative descriptive study would be the appropriate research strategy deployed for this work. This work demonstrated full alignment to each of the five established qualitative descriptive study principles.

Principle #1: data from natural setting

The qualitative descriptive study principle of collecting data directly from the phenomenon's natural setting was accomplished. All interviews of participating teachers were held inside of their school. This was significant because each teacher's school was the natural setting where they had experienced the phenomenon, or the impact of current educational accountability policy on these teachers' motivation and morale.

Principle #2: interview data, focus group data or observation data

The original intent of this study was to include two different instruments for collecting data. This plan had to be modified when one of the two instruments, a questionnaire, malfunctioned. This malfunction led to the gathering of inadequate data. The data it had collected could not be triangulated with the data collected from the teacher interviews. This data collection technique was executed without issue and remained as the sole source of evidence informing the study's findings.

Principle #3: purposeful sampling

Teachers from two schools were targeted for this study. In order to participate in the study though, these teachers had to meet the established selection criteria. Middle school teacher participants had to have worked in their schools before and during Priority School status.

Elementary teachers were invited to participate in the study only if they worked in their school before, during and after Priority School status. The presence of these selection criteria supported the purposeful sampling aspect of this study.

Principle #4: thematic analysis

The study's data analysis plan was carried out with a lone focus on the collection of participating teachers' interview data. Each interview was audio recorded. The audio recording of each interview was then transcribed. After the teachers' interviews had been transcribed, the process of open coding began. These codes were then organized into major overarching themes. These themes were then interpreted to provide findings to the study's five research questions.

Principle #5: straightforward reporting of findings

The goal of this study was to clearly answer all five of its research questions. In the general sense, teachers initially felt that the educational accountability policy and its sanctions had negatively impacted their motivation. However, continued analysis of the data collected in this study showed that the presence of this policy and its sanctions had positively impacted their expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. These deeper dive findings revealed that the policy had a positive impact on these teachers' motivation. The study's finding regarding the policy's impact on teachers' morale was much more direct than the findings pertaining to the policy's impact on their motivation. The presence of the current educational accountability policy and its sanctions had a negative impact on the Priority School teachers' morale. The straightforward findings of each of the study's five research questions were presented in this chapter.

Chapter Summary

The analysis of this study's interview protocol data produced a wide range of coded responses from teacher participants. These coded themes were then categorized into six major themes. These major themes included a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life, Reformed*

Practice, Students and Families, Pride and Efficacy, Consistent and Unified Staff and *Testing.* There was a significant variance in the volume of coded responses that each major theme encapsulated across questions. However, the distribution of each theme's coded data within each question supported the findings related to the study's research questions. These findings supported answers to each of these research questions. This was done by analyzing the data contributing to the most recurring themes drawn from participating teacher informants' responses to interview protocol questions. Each of the interview protocol questions were aligned to one of the study's research questions. Research Question 1 was written to determine how current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' motivation in low-performing Priority Schools. The findings of this research question suggested that these sanctions had a negative impact on teachers' motivation in this setting. Research Question 2 examined how current educational policy sanctions impacted teachers' expectancy related to improving overall school performance, resulting in the elimination of the school's status as a Priority School. The findings of this research question suggested that the sanctions had a negative impact on teachers' expectancy. The objective of Research Question 3 of the study was to find out how current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' valence related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's status as a Priority School. The findings of this research question pointed to a positive impact on teachers' valence, caused by the presence of Priority School sanctions. The purpose of Research Question 4 of the study was to determine how current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' instrumentality related to improving overall school performance, resulting in eliminating their school's Priority School status. An analysis of the data collected from the study's interview protocol produced the finding of the Priority School sanctions positively

impacting teachers' instrumentality while working in the Priority School setting. The findings of Research Questions 2, 3 and 4 suggest that the educational accountability policy sanctions had a positive impact on teachers' motivation. When teachers were asked directly about this impact, they felt that the policy negatively impacted their motivation. However, the results of the Expectancy Theory-based research questions showed that the policy *positively* impacted their motivation. Finally, Research Question 5 of the study set out to determine how current educational accountability policy sanctions impact teachers' morale in low-performing schools. The data collected from the interview protocol questions that were designed to answer this question led to the finding that Priority School sanctions have a negative impact on teachers' morale. The results of a cross-case analysis of the data collected from the interview protocol were then presented. This was done in order to demonstrate the measures of validity within the study. These results showed confirmability between the responses collected from teachers in both school settings for most interview protocol questions that qualified for this analysis. This confirmability supports the general findings of the study and the answers to the study's research questions.

The study established a presence of each of the major qualitative descriptive principles that were outlined in the second chapter of this work. Some of these principles were completely present in the study. Others though, were either not fully completed as they were originally proposed to be or remain incomplete until this work is successfully defended and published. The incorporation of these qualitative descriptive principles into this work supported the findings pertaining to what type of motivational and morale impact was experienced by Priority School teachers when current educational accountability sanctions were present.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This intent of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how a current educational accountability policy's sanctions shaped the motivation and morale of Priority School teachers. Its culmination is presented in this chapter, which is separated into three distinct sections. The chapter's first section features a discussion that includes both a summary of the study's findings as well as the interpretations and implications of these findings. The next section is a report of the study's limitations. This section is necessary since obstacles and shortcomings arose during the research design's implementation. Finally, recommendations for future study are made in the chapter's third section. The intent of this study was to fill a gap in the literature existing on this topic. However, several questions about educational accountability policy, teacher motivation and teacher morale remain.

Discussion

This descriptive study investigated the impact of current educational accountability policy on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect upon the body of work that was presented in each of the subsequent chapters. The conclusion of this work is presented through three major sections. The first section provides a discussion of the study's findings. This section also includes the interpretations and implications of these findings. The second section presents the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter closes with a section on the researcher's recommendation for future study.

Summary of findings.

This study utilized qualitative data derived from several former or current Priority School teacher interviews. Six major themes were established from the analysis of coded data across all participants' responses to each of the interview protocol questions. These themes included a

Diminished Quality of Professional Life, Reformed Practice, Students and Families, Pride and Efficacy, Consistent and Unified Staff, as well as *Testing*. Some of these themes were more prominent than others. The theme of a *Diminished Quality of Professional Life* was more recurring than any other established major theme. This theme was found more than twice as much as any other theme found across the coded interview protocol transcription data. The order of the most recurring themes that followed (from most recurring to least recurring) were *Reformed Practice, Students and Families, Pride and Efficacy, Consistent and Unified Staff* and *Testing*. The next major data analysis task sought to uncover the recurring presence of these themes found among all teachers' responses to each interview protocol question.

The most recurring theme-related responses from both schools' teachers revealed findings that supported responses to the study's five research questions. This was established by aligning each of the interview protocol questions to one of the five research questions. Following this process, Research Question 1 produced findings revealing that the current educational accountability policy's sanctions had a negative impact on Priority School teachers' motivation, in the general sense. Regarding Research Question 2, findings indicated that these sanctions positively impacted teachers' expectancy. The study produced findings for Research Question 3 as well. These findings suggested that the policy's sanctions had a positive impact on teachers' valence. The investigation of Research Question 4 suggested that the policy and its sanctions produced a positive impact on teachers' instrumentality while working in the Priority School setting. The findings of the last research question, Research Question 5, showed that the educational accountability sanctions had a negative impact on the teachers' morale.

Finally, this qualitative descriptive study presented the findings concerning a cross-case analysis of interview protocol responses. This process uncovered trends of recurring theme-

related responses of teachers from the elementary school, those of the teachers from the middle school, as well as a combination of all participating teachers. The findings of this analysis confirmed the responses between participating teachers of both schools for six of the nine common interview protocol questions asked of them. This confirmability supported the general findings of the study and the answers to the study's research questions.

This study's findings were produced as a result of three major data analysis tasks embedded within the study. The findings of each task supported the study's relevance. Further interpretation of these findings was necessary in order to reinforce this relevance.

Interpretations and implications.

In order to achieve the objectives of this qualitative descriptive study, it was necessary to establish findings for all five research questions. The study's results were established by applying the findings of each of the study's research questions to its conceptual framework (see *Figure 5*). These findings provided the foundation for the study's implications.

When engaging in this process, the findings of Research Question 1 revealed whether participating teachers felt that the current educational accountability policy and its sanctions had an impact on their motivation, in the general sense. The findings of Research Question 2, Research Question 3 and Research Question 4 were then interpreted as a more intensive examination of the *actual* impact of these policy sanctions on teachers' motivation based on the key elements of Expectancy Theory. Finally, the findings of Research Question 5 were interpreted to determine whether the current educational accountability policy sanctions impacted participating teachers' morale.

A change in teachers' behavior (motivation) was indeed uncovered when applying the findings of Research Question 1 to the study's conceptual framework (see *Figure 5*). This

change was suggestive of the current educational accountability policy negatively impacting teachers' motivation. However, when a more intensive analysis of how each of the key Expectancy Theory variables within teachers were impacted by the policy's sanctions, a conflicting interpretation was revealed.

Research questions were designed to reflect how the policy impacted participating teachers' expectancy (Research Question 2), valence (Research Question 3) and instrumentality (Research Question 4). The findings of Research Question 2 suggested that the policy's sanctions had a positive impact on teachers' expectancy. The findings of Research Question 3 pointed to these sanctions having a positive impact on participating teachers' valence. Research Question 4 produced findings that supported a positive impact of the policy's sanctions on participating teachers' instrumentality. When applied to the study's conceptual framework (see *Figure 5*), this combination of participating teachers' positively impacted expectancy, valence and instrumentality led to an overall finding of a "Highly Positive Motivational Impact." This interpretation conflicted with teachers' initial perception of the policy's impact on their motivation and overruled the preliminary findings of Research Question 1.

Applying this finding to the study's conceptual framework (see *Figure 5*) led to a less complex interpretation than was found for the policy's impact on teachers' motivation. Overall, the policy had a "Negative Morale Impact" on teachers. Teachers experienced a greater presence of negative feelings and attitudes about their school after they had been exposed to the current educational accountability policy's sanctions.

One possibility should be considered when reflecting on the study's research questions and the inconsistencies found among those pertaining to teachers' motivation. Initially, teachers perceived that the policy negatively impacted their motivation. This was not the case when they

were asked about the policy's impact on the key variables of the Expectancy Theory. Teachers' responses revealed that the policy had a positive impact on all three key variables (expectancy, valence and instrumentality). The combination of these varying impacts resulted in an assessment that the policy's sanctions had "Highly Positive Motivational Impact" on Priority School teachers. This inconsistency may have been found due to teachers' lack of familiarity with the Expectancy Theory and the key components that exist within it. On the other hand, the study found that the current educational accountability policy had a "Negative Morale Impact" on participating teacher informants. This being the case, it is possible that teachers' negatively impacted feelings and attitudes about their workplace may have influenced their responses when asked about how the policy impacted their general motivation. A more accurate motivational impact of the policy was revealed when the focus of questioning turned to how the policy impacted the theory's variables. These variables were unfamiliar to participants.

In summary, the interpretation of this study's findings revealed that the sanctions embedded within the current educational accountability policy were found to have a behavioral impact on both participating teachers' motivation and morale. The policy and its sanctions had a positive impact on teachers' motivation. In contrast, the policy had a negative impact on their morale. Each of these findings is significant for different reasons.

The findings included a behavioral change in both the motivation and morale of Priority School teachers. The significance of this finding is that it verifies the existence of a behaviorist element of the current educational accountability policy. This behaviorist element goes beyond the instructional reform and redesign requirements found in its language. What is not written in the policy is that when a school has Priority School sanctions imposed onto it, the teachers of that school will experience increased levels of motivation to improve the school's overall

performance. This finding is also significant. The idea would likely be welcomed by those who work or live in a community with schools on the cusp of having such sanctions imposed onto them. On the other hand, a different opinion might be forged by understanding that Priority School teachers' morale would decline when these sanctions are imposed onto them. If teachers' feelings and attitudes toward their workplace declines, concerns would arise pertaining to the loyalty they have toward their schools. One such concern might include potential increases in teacher absences at work. Also, declining morale could contribute to increased volumes of Priority School teachers seeking employment opportunities with another school, district, or outside of the field of education altogether. Such an affect might result in the eventual loss of teachers who are needed and trained to turn around the performance of the Priority School. These possibilities may seem undesirable to school level and district level administrators who work in Priority Schools or those on the brink of receiving such a label.

Several implications were derived from the study's findings. These implications were established when considering the teachers who participated in the study. The implications were also developed by considering topics of educational accountability policy, teacher motivation and teacher morale. Finally, the implications reflect the problem of the additional pressure and expectations placed onto Priority School teachers, and the field of education, in general.

Regarding the teachers who participated in the study, these findings imply that working in a Priority School changed them in terms of their motivation and morale. This change occurred for both teachers whose school improved its way out of Priority School status, as well as those whose school remained with the label. One implication is that working in a Priority School increased their motivation to perform at a higher level. It could also be implied that working in a Priority School left them with more negative feelings and attitudes about their workplace as

compared to before their school received this label and the sanctions that came along with it. In other words, the study's findings imply that working in a Priority School made teachers more motivated to succeed but left them feeling more negativity toward their school in the process.

The study's findings also hold implications for the topics of educational accountability policy, teacher motivation and teacher morale. In terms of educational accountability policy, these findings imply that the Priority School sanctions found in Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c caused Priority School teachers to be more motivated while working their way out of this distinction. The success of this implication may be counteracted though, by the implication that the same sanctions left teachers feeling worse about their place of employment throughout the Priority School process. It is important that Priority School teachers' motivation increased in this study. However, when the morale of teachers declines in these schools, problems could arise in retaining these teachers in the Priority School setting, where their increased motivation is needed the most. These findings imply that policy makers should proceed with caution when writing future educational accountability policies. They should assess the potential impact of teachers' morale when considering sanctions to be embedded in such policies. If Priority Schools lose their highly motivated teachers, the chances of these schools to accomplish the goal of such policies would concurrently decline. This type of issue would likely contribute to a result that is contradictory to the goal of educational accountability policies such as MCL 380.1280c, which intend to prompt improvements in the performance of low-performing schools.

The study's problem statement was described in the first chapter of this work. The problem statement suggested that additional pressure is placed onto Priority School teachers who are exposed to educational accountability sanctions. The added pressure of sanctions also comes with the added pressure of an expectation that Priority School teachers produce increased student

achievement outcomes faster than schools that had not been issued this label. The study's findings imply an additional source of stress for Priority School teachers. The additional pressure was the result of increased expectations of their work performance while working in the Priority School. The presence of this extra source of stress led to a progressive decline in teachers' feelings and attitudes about their workplace. Such an implication would only exacerbate the study's initial problem statement.

Finally, and in general, the study's findings have implications for the field of education. This study found that Priority School teachers' motivation increased and morale decreased due to the current educational accountability policy sanctions that were imposed onto their schools. These findings imply that there *is* a place for holding educators accountable, while at the same time prompting changes that are needed to make rapid improvements to low-performing Priority Schools. This idea was validated through the study's finding of current educational accountability policy sanctions leading to an increase in Priority School teachers' motivation. What provides further validity to this implication is that motivation was found to have increased for the teachers of both the school that had been released of its Priority School label as well as the school that remained a Priority School at the time when the study was conducted. On the other hand, the findings of this study also imply an unintended negative consequence of the current educational accountability policy. This unintended negative consequence is the declining morale found among the same group of teachers. A common reason why people choose the field of education as a profession is that they enjoy engaging in teaching and learning with children. Under this premise, professional educators have positive initial attitudes and feelings about their work and perhaps of their workplace as well. However, educators who work in Priority Schools may feel as though they've been robbed of this once positive feeling and attitude by the sanctions

of the current educational accountability policy. These implications leave the field of education with an interesting question that relates to people who have chosen education as a profession: Is the current approach to educational accountability policy truly adequate when it produces a teacher's increased motivation to improve upon individual performance, while at the same time, producing a steadily declining attitude toward the workplace of that teacher?

The study's findings also hold implications for practice across a variety of groups. Each group holds specific roles and responsibilities in the public education realm. The findings suggest a variety of professional practice considerations recommended for members of each group. These groups include lawmakers at the federal and state levels, school district and school level administrators, and teachers.

First, the findings of this study imply that it may behoove lawmakers at the federal and state levels to conduct further study on the current educational accountability policy's unintended negative consequence of decreasing the morale of teachers who work in low-performing Priority Schools. One concern that supports this idea is that if people aren't happy with their work or their workplace, establishing sustained and long-term improvements in performance seems unlikely. These findings imply that lawmakers who have influence over current educational accountability policy should consider how to address increasing the morale of teachers in low-performing Priority Schools in future versions of such a policy.

The findings of this study also have implications for the practice of administrators at the school district and school building levels. This study showed that teachers' motivation to succeed rose under challenging circumstances. The circumstances also caused the teachers' morale to decline. However, these findings imply that increasing Priority School teachers' motivation *and* morale may be accomplished. School district and school building administrators

may wish to consider a more supportive approach to holding these teachers accountable, while pushing them to improve upon teaching and learning outcomes. The presence of educational accountability policy sanctions should be promoted as an opportunity to try something new in order to achieve a different outcome. Under no circumstances should the presence of such sanctions be used as a threat to Priority School teachers' professional practice and livelihood.

Finally, this study's findings have implications for teachers. The weight of the low-performing Priority School sanctions world falls on the shoulders of this group. Several added pressures placed onto teachers of Priority Schools were discussed earlier in this section. Despite these stressors, the study unearthed the resilience of the teachers who took part in the study. This resilience was manifested through their increased motivation that resulted from working in a Priority School. The thought of a teacher coming out of the Priority School process as a stronger practitioner should be encouraging to any professional educator entering into such a circumstance. However, the study's findings also imply that teachers should be cautioned about the Priority School process lending to a potential decline in their workplace morale. Knowing this information ahead of time though, rather than learning it over the progression of the Priority School process, may further support the resilience of teachers' who find themselves immersed in such an environment.

Limitations

The study's research design was created after a thorough review of the literature on the topic was conducted. This review supported the creation of the study's conceptual framework. This framework served as the blueprint for the strategy to be used to address the study's research questions. The literature review also supported the researcher's plan to engage in a qualitative descriptive study to determine the impact of current educational accountability policy on Priority

School teachers' motivation and morale. Various measures of validity were achieved in the study as well. Despite these strengths, limitations were also present within this study.

One of the study's limitations pertained to the professional relationship that exists between the researcher and the potential participating teacher informants selected to take part in the study. While the study was being conducted, the researcher was a principal in one of the two elementary schools in the school district where the study took place. The school in which the researcher worked was not selected as one of the two settings included within the study. However, since November of 2014, when the researcher started his employment with the district, he developed a familiarity with several of the potential participating teacher informants. At times, he had indirectly worked with teachers from both the district's other elementary school as well as its middle school. Since this was the case, many of the participating teacher informants were familiar with the researcher. This limitation could not be avoided due to the small geographical and population-based size of the school district, and since its middle school has also been subjected to the newest level of accountability for priority schools in Michigan, which contributes to the uniqueness of conducting this study in such a setting. This limitation concern was addressed by the fact that none of the participating teacher informants had at any time been under the direct professional supervision of the researcher. Furthermore, all participating teacher informants had strict anonymity guaranteed before, during, and after the data collection process. These steps were put in place in order to increase the genuine nature and accuracy of the data provided by those who participate in the study. This was also necessary to decrease any potential conflicts of interest that might have been present if the researcher conducted the study with teacher participants who worked in the same school as the researcher and under his direct supervision. Also, the researcher did not

conduct the teacher interviews. Instead, the teachers were interviewed by one of two professional colleagues. Both colleagues were involved in the same doctoral program as the researcher, though in different capacities. Both were given a protocol for conducting each interview, audio recorded each interview and took observational notes from each interview to support the previous chapter of this work. These measures were necessary in order to eliminate the presence of any biases or reactions throughout the data collection process. Teachers' familiarity with the researcher was one limitation of the study. In addition, teachers' familiarity with Priority School sanctions presented another constraint.

Another identified limitation pertained to participants' awareness of the language of the educational accountability policy that was in place at the time of the study. The researcher spent extensive time researching educational accountability policy, teacher motivation, and teacher morale. He was very familiar with the language of the educational accountability policy that was in place in the State of Michigan at the time that this study was conducted. However, it would be unsafe to assume that all participating teacher informants were equally as knowledgeable of Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c. Any gaps in the participants' knowledge of the policy and the formal language of the sanctions embedded within it would influence how they responded to the instruments utilized within this study. The researcher sought to determine if such a relationship existed. However, the study's findings may not be entirely accurate if the participating teacher informants were not fully aware of the policy's sanctions imposed onto their school. In order to address this in the future, teachers would need to be provided with an overview of how the policy sanctions had been imposed onto their school. It would be important to provide this information to participating teacher informants prior to the data collection period. Putting this step in place would strengthen the preparation of participating teacher

informants for taking part in the study's data collection protocols. The provision of this information would also support a more consistent knowledge base of the policy across teacher participants before they formally contributed to the study. Taking these actions would address any gaps in a teacher's knowledge of the policy, as well as any variance in familiarity with the policy's sanctions across participating teacher informants. However, it would not address any concerns related to the small number of teachers who took part in this study.

A third limitation of this study is that it took place with a small number of teachers in two relatively small schools, both within the same southeastern Michigan school district. A high rate of teacher turnover in both schools made a significant contribution to this limitation. Many teachers who would have met the criteria for taking part in the study had left their school and the school district for other employment opportunities. However, since the researcher was not seeking to establish external validity or generalizability outside of the setting of the study, this limitation did not hinder the validity or reliability of the study. If the study's findings pointed to the presence or lack of a significant relationship between the sanctions of Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c and teachers' motivation and morale, the researcher could have recommended that additional studies deploying similar methods take place in other districts with other priority schools. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that no other Priority School in Michigan had experienced the intensity of oversight sanctions that were imposed onto the schools in this study. This inconsistency may lead to data quality issues since the presence of significant differences in the sanctions imposed onto participating Priority School teachers would exist. If acted upon, this recommendation would build upon the sample included in this study. This would better serve future researchers in their goal of establishing external validity and

generalizability. A final limitation found within the study pertained to a flaw in the execution one of the two research methods described earlier in this work.

One of the study's limitations stood out as having the most significant impact on its findings. The limitation was birthed when the study's questionnaire malfunctioned. This malfunction kept the instrument from collecting key data that aligned to the study's research questions. The study's conceptual framework and methodology suggested that this data would contribute to the study's findings. This error occurred as a result of final revisions that were made to many of the instrument's questions. The malfunction occurred as a result of the removal of a description of each item found next to the rating area on the questionnaire. During a final review of the instrument, it was determined that these descriptions seemed redundant. Each of these descriptions appeared as a repeat of the actual question shown above the rating area of each item on the instrument. These descriptions were removed. This change unknowingly deactivated the radio buttons that participants would use to rate how each of the items impacted their motivation and morale. This issue occurred across most of the items on the study's questionnaire. The problem was not discovered until after the questionnaire had been administered to participating teachers. Those who completed the faulty questionnaire had only provided recordable responses to the few items that were not impacted by this change. The result of this error was the collection of data that could not adequately support the findings of this study. What was missing from the research plan of the study was a final test of this instrument prior to its administration to teachers. This limitation could certainly be addressed in the future by taking this step. Regarding *this* study, this limitation caused the researcher to depend solely on the participant data collected from teacher interviews. This circumstance caused the researcher to alter the conceptual framework and original design of the study. The

most significant limitation of this study was indeed the researcher's failure to implement the study's original conceptual framework and research plan.

Despite these limitations described above, each limitation could be addressed in future studies. This would include the elimination of the researcher's familiarity of the teachers participating in the study. In addition, a limitation could be avoided by making sure that participants had a clear and consistent knowledge of the educational accountability policy. Researchers interested in replicating this study should also seek to conduct it in a school or school district that had the same unique accountability sanctions as those that were selected for this study. Finally, it would be critical that each of the study's instruments are fully reviewed and evaluated for their administrative functioning prior to their use in a future study. It is the aspiration of this researcher that these limitations and recommendations will contribute to similar studies conducted in the future.

Recommendations for Further Study

The study's findings indicated the impact of current educational accountability policy on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. The study showed that the sanctions embedded within Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c produced a positive impact on Priority School teachers' motivation. The policy also had a negative impact on the morale of the teachers who took part in the study. This investigation produced answers to all five of the established research questions. Despite these accomplishments, several topical questions remain. These questions should be considered in future research on this topic.

Remaining questions.

The study's findings addressed the problem statement described earlier in this work. However, the problem will likely remain until the findings of this study and others like it

influence how future educational accountability policies are established. This desired influence can be attained by building upon the existing body of research through an agenda for future research on this topic. This research agenda should address several remaining topical questions. These questions range from how similar studies on other, *more* current educational accountability policies could take place, to how this study could be replicated and strengthened in the future.

When this study took place, Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c was the most current educational accountability policy in the state. From the start of this study to its end, Michigan transitioned from this policy to its *more* current policy, Michigan's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan, which was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in November 2017 (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). This being the case, future studies could be put in place to investigate how teacher motivation and morale are impacted by the most intensive sanctions or supports of this policy. This policy assigns the designation of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) to schools that have an overall index value in the bottom 5% of all schools in Michigan (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). The overall index value associated with this policy replaced the top-to-bottom ranking system that was embedded within Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c. The designation of CSI Schools in the new policy also replaced the Priority School label from the policy that was examined in this study. What the two policies have in common though is that both labels have been placed onto schools that perform in the bottom 5% of schools across the state. However, the sanctions of Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c have been replaced with the supports of Michigan's Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Plan. This being the case, it is recommended that researchers study the impact of these supports on CSI School teachers' motivation and morale. If such a study is to be conducted, it is

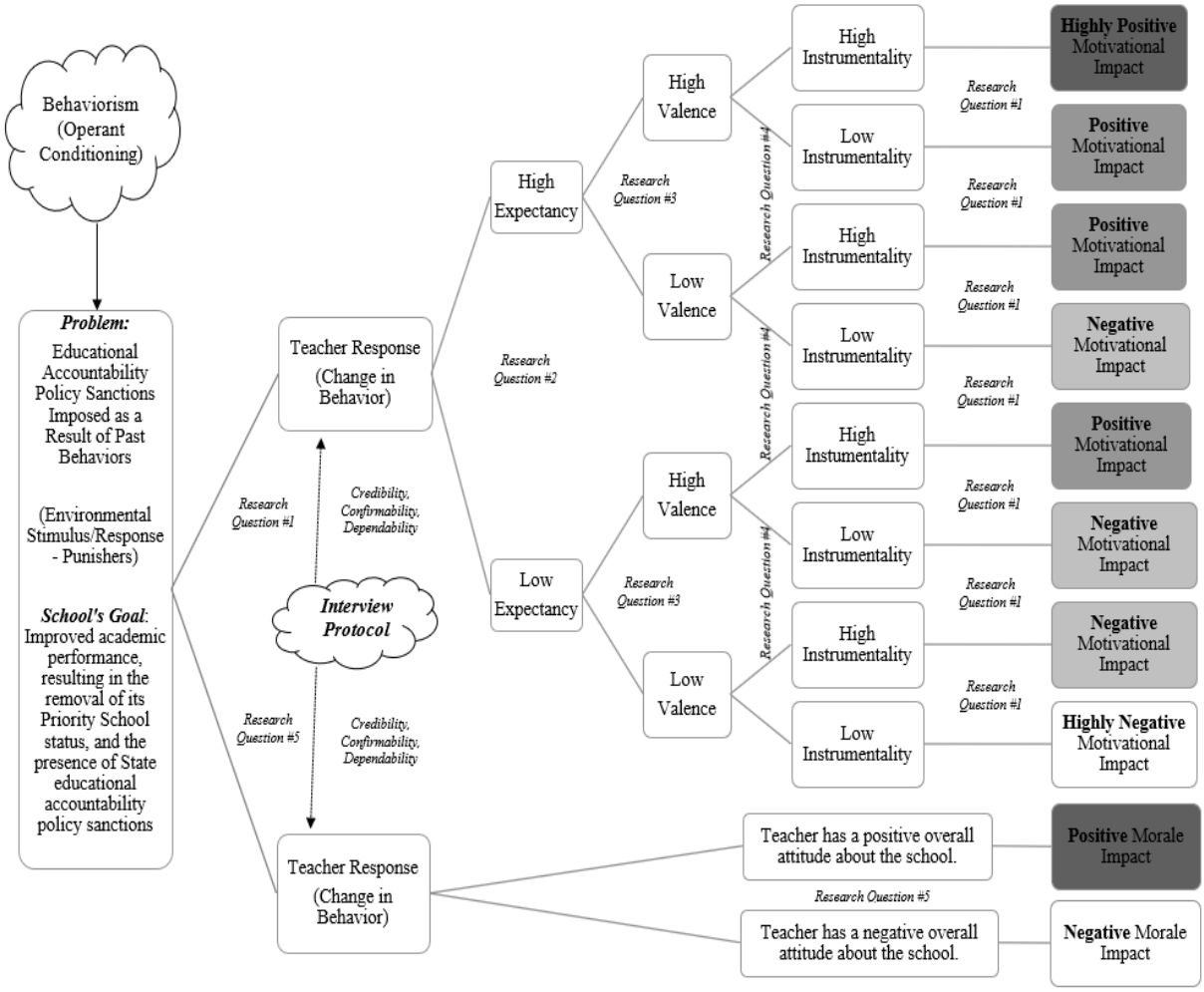
recommended that the researchers compare how the more current policy impacts CSI School teachers' motivation and morale to those of Priority School teachers as identified in this work. This process would serve as a viable check for any type of improvement or lack thereof in this regard.

This study's findings could also support future studies examining teachers who have *not* worked in Priority Schools or CSI Schools. Interesting data would be collected by studying the motivation and morale of these teachers. This participant group have not experienced the most intensive interventions or supports from the state level. Like the previous recommended study, the data collected from this group could be compared to those of the teachers who took part in this study. If similar findings were uncovered in the study on those not impacted by the educational accountability policy sanctions or supports were found as compared to those of this study, one may question whether the sanctions or the mere presence of an accountability policy in education would cause the impact on teachers' motivation and morale. If the studies' findings differ, the findings of this study would be further validated. Either way, a study on the motivation and morale of those not impacted by an educational accountability policy's sanctions or supports would carry great value.

Future studies on this topic may include alternative research methods as well. This study planned to utilize data from a questionnaire that was to be administered to Priority School teachers. This instrument malfunctioned, resulting in the aggregation of unusable data. The study's teacher interview component was executed as planned. This instrument provided the data that was analyzed and interpreted in the study. The study's conceptual framework was altered due to the malfunction of the questionnaire. The revised framework only included the qualitative interview protocol and was devoid of the quantitative questionnaire. The study's final

conceptual framework is shown in *Figure* 6. This finalized framework reflects the actual research methods that were implemented in this study.

Figure 6. Revised Conceptual Framework



Of course, the inclusion of a properly functioning questionnaire in a future study would be one way to utilize other research methods in future studies. The findings of this type of research design were the original objective of this work. Such findings remain of great interest to the researcher.

Other qualitative research methods could be conducted in a study on this topic as well. For example, researchers could integrate observational data into a study. This could be done by

making observations of teachers who work in low-performing schools. These observations should be taken at various times while these teachers' schools have educational accountability sanctions or supports imposed onto them. Following this process would allow a researcher to track any changes in teacher's motivation and morale over a prolonged period. Finally, a researcher could utilize a focus group strategy rather than the interview protocol that took place in this study. This approach would provide data that would reveal how perspectives collected from individuals may differ from those collected from a group of teachers at the same time while they interact with each other (Winlow, Simm, Marvell & Schaaf, 2012; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). Studies such as these may produce additional findings that support or refute those found in this work.

Future studies could also seek ways to achieve external generalizability. One way to accomplish this would be to increase the number of teachers taking part in the study. A researcher could seek the participation of all Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) teachers in Michigan in the study. An undertaking such as this would require a great deal of time and resources to complete. It would also likely require the elimination of any qualitative instruments and the exclusive use of quantitative methods. This would be due to the massive population of teachers working in Michigan's 128 CSI Schools, (Michigan Department of Education, 2018). External generalizability could be established if a large enough number of CSI School teachers took part in the quantitative study and if the results of the study were common across different their different contexts (Frey, 2018). If this sample size is unrealistic, the scale of this population could be reduced to a random sampling (Peck, 2017) of CSI teachers of an entire county in Michigan. However, reducing the sample population size would also

impact a researcher's ability to establish external generalizability when considering the support aspects of Michigan's ESSA Plan.

Finally, this research agenda should include seeking ways to strengthen the measures of validity and reliability established in this study. This study could be strengthened by triangulating the data collected from both instruments that were originally planned for this study. This would be accomplished by conducting a more thorough testing process of the instrument prior to its use. The instrument should be used only if the results of this testing ensure its appropriate functionality. The data collected from this fully operational instrument should then be analyzed and compared to the data collected from the interview. This type of between-method triangulation (Flick, 2018) would further strengthen the credibility of the findings. Any similar findings between instruments would strengthen the study's findings.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to determine the impact of current educational accountability policy sanctions on Priority School teachers' motivation and morale. Five research questions were developed in order to determine this impact. The original conceptual framework that inspired the study's design could not be upheld throughout the implementation of the study. The qualitative interview data collected served as the lone functional data collection instrument of the study. The data collected from this instrument suggested that teachers initially felt the policy's sanctions had a negative impact on their motivation. After this data was collected, the interview questions took a deeper dive into their motivation, specifically by examining the policy's impact on the key Expectancy Theory variables. However, the findings of Research Questions 2, 3 and 4 showed that the policy's sanctions had a *positive* impact on Priority School teachers' motivation. This was because the

policy had a negative impact on teachers' expectancy, though positively impacted their valence and instrumentality. Finally, Research Question 5 produced findings that suggested that the policy's sanctions had a *negative* impact on these teachers' morale. These results confirmed the presence of a behaviorist element that exists within the policy.

Several limitations were present in this study. The study's limitations included the professional relationship that existed between the researcher and the potential participating teacher informants. Another of the study's limitations pertained to participants' awareness of the language of the educational accountability policy that was in place at the time of the study. They did not share a common understanding of the educational accountability policy and its sanctions. No informative documents were provided to participants to give them common reference points of the policy before or during the study. Also, the study took place with a small number of teachers in two relatively small schools, both within the same southeastern Michigan school district. The study's most impactful limitation occurred when the questionnaire component of the planned study malfunctioned. This malfunction resulted in the inability to use data collected from this instrument. Since this was the case, no between-method triangulation could take place in the study, as was originally planned. Recommendations were provided in order to address each of these limitations in future studies.

This study addressed the identified problem statement. This problem will likely remain until similar studies inform future educational accountability policies. Future studies could also support this goal. Studies could take place to determine such a policy's impact on teachers' motivation and morale in Michigan's most recently identified Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools. Similar studies could also be conducted on teachers who have *not* worked in Priority Schools or CSI Schools. Interesting data would be collected by studying the

motivation and morale of these teachers. Future quantitative studies on this topic could also seek ways to achieve external generalizability. One way to accomplish this would be to increase the number of teachers taking part in the study. A researcher could seek a random sampling of all Comprehensive Support and Intervention (CSI) teachers in Michigan in the study to achieve this outcome. Finally, the existing research agenda should seek to strengthen the reliability of the study's design. Conducting the between-method triangulation that was originally planned for in the study would accomplish this aspect of the research agenda.

Michigan Compiled Law 380.1280c was the educational accountability policy examined in this study. This policy was shown to have a behaviorist element embedded within it that impacted participating teachers' motivation and morale. The findings of this study pertain only to the participating teachers from the two schools with Priority School ties that were selected for this study. These teachers' motivation was positively impacted by the policy. Their morale was negatively impacted. These results may be viewed as either intended or unintended consequences of the educational accountability policy's sanctions. Either way, the findings of this study point to ethical issues and questions that remain when it comes to such policies. How low-performing school teachers' motivation and morale are considered when addressing these issues and questions remains to be seen.

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Appendix A. Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval/Exempt Status Letter

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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Flint Institutional Review Board • 530 French Hall, 303 E. Kearsley St, Flint, MI 48502 • phone (810) 762-3283 • fax (313) 593-0536 • research@umflint.edu

To: Tony Sedick

From:

Kazuko Hiramatsu

Cc:

Tyrone Bynoe
Tony Sedick

Subject: Notice of Exemption for [HUM00138164]

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:
Title: Priority School Priorities: Motivation and Morale - A Multi-Case Study
Full Study Title (if applicable): Priority School Priorities: Motivation and Morale - A Multi-Case Study
Study eResearch ID: HUM00138164
Date of this Notification from IRB: 12/14/2017
Date of IRB Exempt Determination: 12/14/2017
UM Federalwide Assurance: FWA00004969 (For the current FWA expiration date, please visit the UM HRPP Webpage)
OHRP IRB Registration Number(s): IRB00000248

IRB EXEMPTION STATUS:
The IRB Flint has reviewed the study referenced above and determined that, as currently described, it is exempt from ongoing IRB review, per the following federal exemption category:

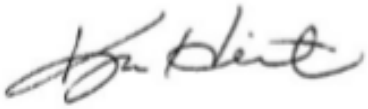
> **EXEMPTION #2 of the 45 CFR 46.101.(b):**
> Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Note that the study is considered exempt as long as any changes to the use of human subjects (including their data) remain within the scope of the exemption category above. Any proposed changes that may exceed the scope of this category, or the approval conditions of any other non-IRB reviewing committees, must be submitted as an amendment through eResearch.

Although an exemption determination eliminates the need for ongoing IRB review and approval, you still have an obligation to understand and abide by generally accepted principles of responsible and ethical conduct of research. Examples of these principles can be found in the Belmont Report as well as in guidance from professional societies and scientific organizations.

SUBMITTING AMENDMENTS VIA eRESEARCH:
You can access the online forms for amendments in the eResearch workspace for this exempt study, referenced above.

ACCESSING EXEMPT STUDIES IN eRESEARCH:
Click the "Exempt and Not Regulated" tab in your eResearch home workspace to access this exempt study.



Kazuko Hiramatsu
Chair, IRB Flint

Appendix B. Motivation and Morale Questionnaire

Start of Block: Consent to Participate in a Research Study-Online Questionnaire

Welcome to the "Motivation and Morale Questionnaire."

Mr. Tony Sedick and Dr. Tyrone Bynoe of the University of Michigan Flint, Department of Education invite you to be a part of a research study (Study HUM00138164) that looks at current educational accountability policy, and its potential impact on teacher motivation and morale. The purpose of the study is to determine whether the presence of educational accountability policy sanctions in a teacher's school causes a change to his or her motivation and morale levels. We are asking you to participate because of your experience as a teacher who has worked in a Priority School in Michigan.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about factors that impact your motivation and morale at work. We expect this questionnaire to take 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

While you may not receive any direct benefit for participating, we hope that this study will contribute to the improvement of Michigan educational policy.

While the researchers of this study will be able to link your survey responses to you, ***your individual questionnaire responses will be kept confidential***. We may publish the results of this study, but ***will not*** include any information that would identify you. If you are willing to take part in a follow-up interview, you will have the opportunity to provide your name and contact information by being re-directed to an additional survey section at the time of submission.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. While it is necessary to answer items in Section I of this survey, you may choose to not answer an individual question from Section II or Section III, or you may skip either Section II or Section III of the questionnaire completely. Simply skip any item you choose to not answer, and move to the next section or question that you are interested in answering.

If you have questions about this research study, you can contact Tony Sedick, University of Michigan Flint, Department of Education, at 586-747-4655, or via email at asedick@umflint.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the UM Flint Institutional Review Board, 303 E Kearsley, 4204 William S White Bldg., Flint, MI 48502-1950, (810) 762-3384, or via email at irb-flint@umflint.edu.

By clicking on "Yes, I agree to participate", you are consenting to participate in this research questionnaire.

If you do not wish to participate, select "No, I do not wish to participate" to exit the questionnaire.

- ○ Yes, I agree to participate. (1)
- ○ No, I do not wish to participate. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If = 2

End of Block: Consent to Participate in a Research Study-Online Questionnaire

---

Start of Block: Welcome & Thank You!!!

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire on teacher motivation and morale! This questionnaire has four sections.

The **first section** will ask you a few **demographic questions about yourself and your professional experience** working in a Priority School.

The **second section** will ask you to rate several items pertaining to factors at work that affect your **motivation**.

The **third section** will ask you to rate several items pertaining to factors at work that affect your **morale**.

The **fourth section** will ask you for your interest in participating in a follow-up interview on this topic. If you are interested, you will be asked to provide your name in this section. When considering your responses in this section, please remember that **your identity will be kept confidential**.

The definitions for both motivation and morale will appear along with each question for your reference while you take this questionnaire. It is expected that this questionnaire will take 20-25

minutes to complete. Again, thank you for your willingness to provide your feedback on this questionnaire, which will be used to inform a doctoral dissertation on educational accountability policy, teacher motivation, and teacher morale.

End of Block: Welcome & Thank You!!!

Start of Block: Section I - Participant Information

Q1 Do you currently work in a Priority School or in a school recently released from Priority School status?

- I currently work in a Priority School. (1)
- My school was recently released of its Priority School status. (2)

Q2 How was your school removed from the State's Priority School List?

- By improving school performance above the 5th Percentile of schools in the state. (1)
- By restructuring the school, renaming the school, and changing the school's core instructional program. (2)
- I am unsure as to how this happened. (3)
- My school has not been released of its Priority School status. (4)

Q3 How many years have you worked in the school in which you currently work?

- 0-3 years (1)
- 4-10 years (2)
- 11-20 years (3)
- Over 20 years (4)

Q4 Within what grade level range(s) do you currently teach? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Kindergarten - 2nd Grade (1)
- ☐ 3rd - 5th Grade (2)
- ☐ 6th - 7th Grade (3)
- ☐ 8th - 12th Grade (4)

End of Block: Section I - Participant Information

Start of Block: Section II - Motivation Questions

Directions: Please find a list of factors/circumstances that impact your **motivation** level at work in this section. After reading each item, select whether each factor/circumstance listed impacts your motivation level at work in a negative (-) manner, does not impact your morale (0), or in a positive manner (+).

Q5
How does the autonomy you currently receive to teach your content area(s) impact your motivation level at work?

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q6 **How do your experiences with implementing the school's Reform/Redesign (Transformation) Plan initiatives impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q7 **How does your school's current culture and climate impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q8 **How do school accountability sanctions required by the State impact your motivation level at work?** The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q9 **How do other staff members', parents', and community members' perceptions of the school staff's ability to do the work needed to improve the school's performance impact**

your motivation level at work? The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q10 **How does the prospect of staying off the Priority Schools list impact your motivation level at work?** The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q11 **Do you receive support from your principal(s)?**

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q13 If Q11 = 2

Q12 **How does support from your principal(s) impact your motivation level at work?** The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q13 **How does the supervision of your school by the State School Reform Office impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of ***motivation*** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q14 Does teacher collaboration exist in your school?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q16 If Q14 = 2

Q15 **How does the collaboration among the teachers of your school impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q16 **The State School Reform Office appointed a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to provide oversight of your school. How did this impact your motivation?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q17 Have you been offered leadership opportunities (committee work, department head, lead teacher, etc.) in your school?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q19 If Q17 = 2

Q18 **How do the leadership opportunities that are available to you (committee work, department head, lead teacher, etc.) impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q19 **How does the potential of the State School Reform Office closing your school impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q20 **How does recognition of your work by school principal(s) impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q21 **How does the process of sharing your students' achievement data with the State School Reform Office impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q22 **How does the current financial status of your school district impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q23 **How does your engagement in a Professional Learning Community impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q24 **How does the process of sharing student achievement data across the school impact your motivation level at work?**

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q25 **How does the school district's comprehensive plan and approach to rapidly turning around the performance of its schools (The Blueprint for Turnaround)** impact your motivation level at work?

The definition of **motivation** is summarized as ***how*** the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q26 **Is there anything else that impacts your motivation at work?** The definition of motivation is summarized as how the factors that prompt the selection of one's action or behavior that produce a desired outcome.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Q26 = 2

Q27 What else impacts your motivation at work? Please explain.

_____

End of Block: Section II - Motivation Questions

Start of Block: Section III - Morale Questions

Directions: Please find a list of factors/circumstances that impact your **morale** level at work in this section. After reading each item, select whether each factor/circumstance listed impacts your motivation level at work in a negative (-) manner, does not impact your morale (0), or in a positive manner (+).

Q28 **How is your morale impacted by the working conditions in the school?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q29 Are you provided with support by your school principal(s)?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q30 **How is your morale impacted when you are provided with support by the principal(s)?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q31 **How is your morale impacted by the process of implementing the school's Reform/Redesign (Transformation) Plan?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q32 **How is your morale impacted when the principal is aware of, and takes action regarding your feelings toward your school?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q33 **How is your morale impacted when you are recognized for your efforts by the principal(s)?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q34 **How is your morale impacted by the public perception of your school?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q35 **How is your morale impacted by the public perception of teachers and the teaching profession, in general?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q36 **How is your morale impacted when you engage in a Professional Learning Community?** The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q37 **How is your morale impacted by the possibility of your school being reconstituted or closed?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q38 **How was your morale impacted by State accountability requirements for your school?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q39 **How is your morale impacted by the current financial status of your school district?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q40 **How is your morale impacted by the amount of work that is expected of you, as a result of working in a Priority School?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q46 **How is your morale impacted by the amount of time that is needed to complete the work that is expected of you?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q47 Does teacher collaboration exist in your school?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q49 If Q47 = 2

Q48 **How is your morale impacted by the current amount of teacher collaboration in your school?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q49 **How is your morale impacted by what is needed in order to implement the school's Reform/Redesign (Transformation) Plan initiatives?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q50 **How is your morale impacted by the opportunities provided to celebrate small and large successes within your team, and across the school?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q51 **How is your morale impacted by the amount of testing that takes place in your school, and the importance of each test?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q52 **How is your morale impacted by the current enrollment trends of your school district?**
The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q53 **How is/was your morale impacted by the presence of State-level (State School Reform Office) intervention in your school?**
The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q54 **How is your morale impacted by the existing potential to improve your status as a professional educator?**
The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q55 **How is your morale impacted by the current level of community you feel among your coworkers?**

The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

	Negative (-) (1)	No Impact (0) (2)	Positive (+) (3)
1 (1)	○	○	○

Q56 Is there anything else that impacts your morale at work?
The definition of morale is summarized as your attitudes and feelings toward your school or district.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Q56 = 2

Q57 What else impacts your morale at work? Please explain.

_____

End of Block: Section III - Morale Questions

Start of Block: Thank you!

Q58 Are you willing to potentially participate in a follow-up interview on this topic?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Q58 = 2

Q59 Your response indicates that you are willing to potentially participate in a follow-up interview on this topic. Please enter your name. **Remember, your individual responses will be kept confidential.**

_____

Q60. Your response indicates that you are willing to potentially participate in a follow-up interview on this topic. Please enter your email address. **Remember, your individual responses will be kept confidential.**

_____

End of Block: Thank you!

Start of Block: Block 6

You have completed the Motivation and Morale Survey. Thank you again for your time and participation!

End of Block: Block 6

Appendix C. Interview Protocol

1. Has working in a Priority School changed you (for example professionally, emotionally, mentally, etc.), and if so, how?

2. During the time that your school has been labeled a Priority School, have you experienced any changes in the workplace, as compared to the time when your school was not considered a Priority School? If so, please explain.

2b. If your school is no longer a Priority School, could you describe any changes in the workplace since coming out of Priority School status?

3. In the Priority School setting, how would you describe the level of effort you feel is needed to improve the overall performance of the school so that the school would no longer be a Priority School?

4. In the Priority School setting, how would you describe the type of work performance that is needed in order to eliminate the school's Priority School label?

5. In the Priority School setting, can you describe a time when your students' performance improved? How did you know that they were improving? What evidence did you have of this improvement? How did this improvement impact you?

6. In the Priority School setting, can you describe a time when your students' performance stagnated? How did you know that they were stagnating? What evidence did you have of this stagnation? How did this stagnation impact you?

7. In the Priority School setting, can you describe a time when your students' performance declined? How did you know that they were declining? What evidence did you have of this decline? How did this decline impact you?

8. Describe your general feelings or attitudes about your school or the climate of the school before Priority School status.

9. Describe your general feelings or attitudes about your school or the climate of the school during Priority School status.

9b. (If applicable) Describe your general feelings or attitudes about your school or the climate of the school after Priority School status.

Appendix D. Informed Consent Form – Motivation and Morale Questionnaire

Consent to Participate in a Research Study-Online Questionnaire

Welcome to the "Motivation and Morale Questionnaire"

Mr. Tony Sedick and Dr. Tyrone Bynoe of the University of Michigan Flint, Department of Education invite you to be a part of a research study that looks at current educational accountability policy, and its potential impact on teacher motivation and morale. The purpose of the study is to determine whether the presence of educational accountability policy sanctions in a teacher's school causes a change to his or her motivation and morale levels. We are asking you to participate because of your experience as a teacher who has worked in a Priority School in Michigan.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about factors that impact your motivation and morale at work. We expect this survey to take 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

While you may not receive any direct benefit for participating, we hope that this study will contribute to the improvement of Michigan educational policy.

While the researchers of this study will be able to link your survey responses to you, ***your individual responses will be kept confidential***. We may publish the results of this study but ***will not*** include any information that would identify you.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. While it is necessary to answer items in Section I of this survey, you may choose to not answer an individual question from Section II or Section III, or you may skip either Section II or Section III of the questionnaire completely. Simply skip any item you choose to not answer and move to the next section or question that you are interested in answering.

If you have questions about this research study, you can contact Tony Sedick, University of Michigan Flint, Department of Education, at 586-747-4655, or via email at asedick@umflint.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the UM Flint Institutional Review Board, 303 E Kearsley, 4204 William S White Bldg., Flint, MI 48502-1950, (810) 762-3384, or via email at irb-flint@umflint.edu.

By clicking on "Yes, I agree to participate", you are consenting to participate in this research questionnaire.

If you do not wish to participate, select “No, I do not wish to participate” to exit the questionnaire.

- ○ Yes, I agree to participate. (1)
- ○ No, I do not wish to participate. (2)

Appendix E. Informed Consent Form – Interview Protocol

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
"Priority School Priorities: Motivation and Morale – A Qualitative Descriptive Study" -- INTERVIEW

Principal Investigator: Tony Sedick, Ed.S., Department of Education, University of Michigan Flint

You are invited to be a part of a research study looks at current educational accountability policy, and its potential impact on teacher motivation and morale. The purpose of the study is to determine whether the presence of educational accountability policy sanctions in a teacher's school causes a change to his or her motivation and morale levels. We are asking you to participate because of your experience as a teacher who has worked in a Priority School in Michigan.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in one face-to-face interview at the location of your choice. The interview should take no more than one hour. I would like to audiotape the interview to make sure that our conversation is recorded accurately. You may still participate in the research even if you decide not to be taped. The discussion topics include any changes you've experienced as a result of working in a Priority School, including changes to your motivation and morale. We will also talk about your feelings pertaining to your school's goal of eliminating or remaining off the list of Priority Schools in Michigan.

While you may not receive a direct benefit from participating in this research, some people find sharing their stories to be a valuable experience. We hope that this study will contribute to understanding how current educational accountability policies are impacting the teachers who are expected to produce a rapid turnaround in the performance of their school.

Answering questions or talking with others about motivation and morale can be difficult. You may choose not to answer any interview question and you can stop your participation in the research at any time.

Participation in this interview process is voluntary and comes with no compensatory incentive. However, your participation in the interview process will inform this important study, which is greatly valued and appreciated

We plan to publish the results of this study but will not include any information that would identify you or your family members. To keep your information safe, the audio recording of your interview will be placed in a secure cloud-based storage system until a written word-for-word copy of the discussion has been created. As soon as this process is complete, the audio recording will be destroyed. The researchers will enter study data on a computer that is password-protected and uses special coding of the data to protect the information. To protect confidentiality, your real name will not be used in the written copy of the discussion. The researchers plan to keep this study data indefinitely for future research about the impact of current educational accountability policy on teachers' motivation and morale.

There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the

research is done safely and properly, including the University of Michigan, or government research offices.

If you have questions about this research, including questions about the scheduling of the interview, you can contact Tony Sedick, University of Michigan Flint, Department of Education, via email at asedick@umflint.edu. You can also contact his faculty advisor, Tyrone Bynoe, Ph.D., University of Michigan Flint, Department of Education, 430 French Hall, Flint, MI 48502, (810) 762-3260, or via email at tbynoe@umflint.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Michigan Flint Institutional Review Board, (810) 762-3384, 303 E Kearsley St., 4204 William S. White Bldg., Flint, MI 48102, or via email at irb-flint@umflint.edu.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be part of the study. Participating in this research is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

I agree to participate in the study.

_____ _____

Signature Date

I agree to be audio recorded as part of the study.

_____ _____

Signature Date