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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

DECISION MAKING OF BUILDING LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS AND
THEIR PERCEPTIONS ON GROUPTHINK

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

JULIE A. FLITCRAFT

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2015

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DEDICATION

To B.F.F.

Always remember that luck is for rabbits.

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ABSTRACT

This research study examined how Groupthink affects educational decision making for building level administrators by identifying the most prominent symptoms of Groupthink and by exposing the characteristics that create an increase of vulnerability to Groupthink.

Participants for this study included building level administrators of 25 public high schools in a Midwest suburban county. These volunteers completed a three part survey which addressed the central research questions for the study:

- 1) What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?
- 2) Among the administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district's belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?
- 3) Among the administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?
- 4) Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence building level administrators' vulnerability to Groupthink?

A quantitative analysis was completed in order to answer the four research questions. The results of the study found that (1) when administrators are hired into a leadership position, their personal beliefs vastly matched that of the district they got hired to serve, (2) the educational decision making areas of curriculum, assessment, discipline,

and safety embodied symptoms of Groupthink, but in which no one area greatly exceeded the others, (3) unanimity and mindguarding were two symptoms that had significantly higher contrasting group means, and (4) the categories of change agent, mission driving decision making, mutual respect of colleagues, conversations between administrator and superintendent, the inclusion of curricular decision making, and the inclusion of assessment decision making yielded significant results.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) believes that “an educational leader’s professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for all educational leaders” (AASA: Code of Ethics). Therefore in order to hire the best leader that will ensure this standard for an educational organization, the organization must know its expectations for an administrative candidate beforehand. Furthermore, candidates for administrative positions must know and value their own belief system in order to lead in the organization where certain expectations are known.

These belief systems vary across school districts, within school buildings of a district, within administrative teams of a building, and within people of an administrative team. The purpose of this research study is to examine current building level administrators’ belief systems and their perceptions of the administrative team’s decision making process for the school in which they lead. This study will use four areas of educational decision making that administrative teams discuss on a regular basis, including curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, to determine whether a shared system of beliefs is being used to ascertain a common, shared vision for the educational institution.

“Excellent administrators have a clear sense of their own unique purpose in life,” (Ventures for Excellence, 2008, p.1) and through their own values, they can advocate for that purpose for the larger institution. When a shared vision is present within an organization, it is important to consistently consider all voices in order to achieve academic and social growth for all students. Shared vision is “building a sense of commitment in a group, but developing shared images of the future we seek to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there” (Senge, 1990, p. 6). Additionally, it is the inherited or revised shared vision that “sustains a moral architecture that fosters the Great Conversation [that] focuses professional vision on the necessities of an appropriate moral architecture for classroom, school, and district” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 13).

“Successful administrators know how to bring it all together for the benefit of stakeholders and institution alike,” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 70) and all factors need to be considered when making decisions for the institution. Some of these factors include making an effort to listen to the differences that exist between leaders’ beliefs, values, and opinions about educational issues within the district. Baumann and Bonner (2013) add that “the potential to take each member’s unique information and combine it during the decision-making process is one of the greatest strengths of a group” (p. 557). Hearing, listening, and understanding each of these educational beliefs that instructional leaders hold valuable to them is essential because “structures and organizations are made great by their people infrastructure. Capable, creative, positive, thoughtful people are the fundamental building blocks of strong, surviving organizations” (Harvey & Drolet, 1994, p. 1).

Educational organizations hold with them a specific culture and “school culture is the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school” (Peterson, 2002, p. 10). Additionally, for individuals to be able to create their own understanding of the world through their own personal experiences, “reflection, combined with personal vision and an internal system of values, becomes the basis of leadership strategies and actions” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 7). Therefore, there is no doubt that with the combination of school culture, personal values and experiences, educational leaders make educationally sound decisions based on what they presume to be the best for their organization.

Brief Review of Literature

Educational organizations are “socially constructed realities, [and] these constructions often have attributed to them an existence and power of their own that allow them to exercise a measure of control over their creators” (Morgan, 1998, p. 182). Consequently, when an individual’s belief conforms to the majority, and the majority is that of the organization, favored ways of thinking exists for the organization. “Favored ways of thinking and acting become traps that confine individuals within socially constructed worlds and prevent the emergence of other worlds” (p. 185).

This idea of favored ways of thinking is explored more within Irving Janis’ Groupthink, which is a term “that characterizes situations where people are carried along by group illusions and perceptions that have a self-sealing quality” (Morgan, 1998, p. 185). In 1972, Janis developed the theory of Groupthink in order to understand why certain groups make decisions that have unsuccessful outcomes, and in 1982 he defined Groupthink as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved

in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (p. 9).

Janis and Mann (1977) discovered that there were five antecedent conditions of Groupthink which include (1) high group cohesiveness, (2) insulation of the group from information outside of the group, (3) no methodical approach for collecting and gathering information, (4) directive leadership with influential power, and (5) a high levels of stress caused by internal and external threats. Although these five conditions do not need to all occur for Groupthink to exist, Rosander, Stiwne, and Granstrom (1998) concluded that the more antecedent conditions that were present within a group, the greater the group ran the risk of developing the symptoms of Groupthink. The eight symptoms of Groupthink Janis (1972) identified can be broken down into three different types (I, II, and III) of symptoms:

Type I symptoms (overestimation of the group) include invulnerability and morality. Invulnerability exists within a group when most of the members are excessively optimistic and will take extraordinary risk in the decision making process because they have a true belief that the group will make the right decision. Morality exists within a group when the group believes that they are making decisions ethically and morally.

Type II symptoms (close-mindedness), include rationalization and stereotypes. Rationalization occurs when the group members discount information and ignore warnings that may cause the group to challenge its assumptions. Stereotypes are present when a group has the belief that those outside of the group do not have the same information and/or ability as the group members in making a decision.

Type III symptoms (pressure toward uniformity) include pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards. Pressure occurs when there is an expectation of loyalty to the group and the decisions of the group. Self-censorship exists when a group member does not want to deviate from the group's shared decision. Unanimity exists when there is the illusion that all group members agree with a certain decision. Mindguards exists within members of the group who keep information from other group members that may cause them to question the effectiveness of the group's decision.

Henningsen, Henningsen, Eden, and Cruz (2006) argued that "these symptoms produce pressure on group members to go along with the favored group position; and, the perception that the group preferences will be not only successful but also just and right is generated" (p. 38). Fuller and Aldag (1998) discussed that the concept of Groupthink has become almost synonymous with bad group decisions and that Janis' theory of Groupthink is the explanation for faulty decision making. National Louis University's Psychologists for Social Responsibility non-profit organization states that "groups affected by Groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to take irrational actions that dehumanize other groups. A group is especially vulnerable to Groupthink when its members are similar in background, when the group is insulated from outside opinions, and when there are no clear rules for decision making."

Mitchell and Eckstein (2009) reviewed that Groupthink has been widely accepted and Baron (2005) adds that this phenomenon has been found to occur in a wide variety of group oriented settings. Therefore when the concept of Groupthink is brought into an educational institution, how is the faulty decision affecting the constituents? When leaders are hired into a school administrative position because their values and beliefs

align to the school's vision and mission, do these leaders make decisions to help improve their district? Or, do they become victim to Groupthink?

Purpose of the Study

There were four main objectives applied to the purpose of this study. First, this study explored the perceptions current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution. Current building administrators were hired with the understanding that they were the best candidate for the position, so perceptions of how their own system of belief matches the district's belief system has been explored. This purpose helped to identify whether building level administrators felt they were hired because they shared the same belief system with the district.

Given that building level administrators believed they were hired because of sharing the district's belief system, the second purpose of the study was to uncover whether they fell victim to Groupthink in any of the four different areas of educational decision making. These four areas, including curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, were explored and this study acknowledged which area of decision making is the most vulnerable to Groupthink for building level administrators who felt they were hired for analogous belief systems.

Thirdly, if it was known that building level administrators acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within a specific area of educational decision making, this study determined which symptom was most the prominent Groupthink symptom in that area of educational decision making. The eight symptoms that were investigated within this study include invulnerability, morality, rationalization, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards.

Lastly, given that a prominent symptom of Groupthink was exposed, the last purpose of the study identified specific characteristics that influence building level administrators' vulnerability to Groupthink. These characteristics included gender, age, race, degree, non-administrative experience, administrative experience, title, district residence, district type, student population, previous position held within district, mission driving decision making, mutual respect of colleagues, conversations between administrator and superintendent, the inclusion of curricular decision making, the inclusion of assessment decision making, the inclusion of discipline decision making, and the inclusion of safety decision making. Therefore with all four purposes combined, this study was designed to identify how Groupthink affects educational decision making for building level administrators that believed they were hired into an administrative position because their belief system matched the district's belief system, as well as, expose the characteristics that influence administrators' susceptibility to Groupthink.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is for instructional leaders to understand that there are certain perceptions that go along with the hiring process for leadership positions within a school. Administrators' educational beliefs are created from their own constructed knowledge and understanding of what is morally just. Therefore, this study provides the instructional leader with the insight necessary of ways to avoid creating a school culture that demands for the conformity of beliefs when there already exists a shared system of belief within the organization. Creating an awareness of how group decisions are made by the people that hold leadership positions is important for maintaining effective student centered decision making.

Additionally, this research study is unique to the field of education because it used quantitative measures to examine differing aspects of observable consequences within the symptoms of Groupthink in an educational setting. The study contains a direct focus on the perceptions building level administrators have on group decision making within four very specific areas of educational decision making. Therefore, it was the researcher's intent to uncover when and where Groupthink occurrences arose so that enough awareness is created within educational environments to avoid Groupthink during group decision making.

Research Questions

- 1) What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?
- 2) Among the administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district's belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?
- 3) Among the administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?
- 4) Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence building level administrators' vulnerability to Groupthink?

Methodology

In order to answer these questions, the researcher developed a three part survey containing information about the building level administrator and the type of district

he/she leads, information on the building level administrator's perception of having a shared system of belief with his/her district, and information concerning Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making. The questions within the survey addressed the participant's perceptions of how educational decisions are made within an administrative team.

The questions within the survey were distributed to 159 building level administrators within 67 communities of a Midwest suburban county. The titles of the prospective participants included building principals, assistant principals, deans, and other administrative positions in which the school district identified as administrative positions. The time frame for survey completion consisted of four weeks, and once this expired, the data was gathered and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Repeated measures were the statistical analysis procedures done to examine the Groupthink occurrences within administrative teams of secondary educational institutions.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary for prospective building level administrators; therefore there was no penalty for choosing not to participate or choosing to withdraw before survey submission. However, because the data was anonymous, once the participant submitted his/her answers, the researcher was not able to exclude or withdraw that response. Participation with this online survey involved risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet, but survey responses were transmitted via a secure encrypted connection to the survey site, surveymonkey.com, with only the researcher having access to the information gathered. Therefore, individuality combined with anonymity allowed for a completely confidential data collection process.

Summary

This chapter presented an introduction for the current study by providing a description of the purpose for the study and a brief review of important literature to define terms that will be further explored within the study. Additionally, this chapter detailed the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the four research questions, and the methodology used for data analysis.

Chapter II will further explore pertinent literature that recognizes previous Groupthink occurrences in history and empirical research studies. Chapter II will also show the connection between community and culture and how it relates to an educational institution, but more importantly, it will discuss how these educational institutions are led by people with differing wealths of knowledge and experiences that may impact decision making for the institution. This will be explored using a variety of information within school administration, areas of decision making, and concepts behind the adult learner.

Chapter III will supply thorough information about the current research study including design, hypotheses, sample space, analysis, and validity and reliability measures. The results of these findings will then later be reported in Chapter IV so that recommendations can be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous Groupthink Research

When it comes to information gathered on Groupthink, this phenomenon has only been examined empirically to a limited degree due to the complexity of the phenomenon. Janis (1982) explains there are antecedent conditions, as well as, observable consequences which can be broken down into two categories, symptoms of Groupthink and symptoms of defective decision making. Janis' two categories include antecedent conditions and observable consequences. Antecedent conditions include three subgroups: (1) cohesion of the group; (2) organizational structural faults; and (3) situational factors. The second antecedent condition, organizational structural faults, can be further broken down into: (a) insulation of the group; (b) lack of impartial leadership; (c) lack of methodical procedure group norms; and (d) homogeneity of group members. The third antecedent condition, situational factors, is also further broken down into: (a) high stress from external threats and (b) temporary low self-esteem.

Observable consequences include two subgroups: (1) symptoms of Groupthink and (2) symptoms of defective decision making. The symptoms of Groupthink contain three specific types of symptoms: (a) type I symptoms (overestimation of the group) which includes invulnerability and morality; (b) type II symptoms (close-mindedness) which includes rationalization and stereotypes; and (c) type III symptoms (pressure toward uniformity) which includes pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards.

The symptoms of defective decision making include: (a) incomplete survey of alternatives; (b) incomplete survey of objectives; (c) failure to examine risks; (d) failure to reappraise rejected alternatives; (e) poor information search; (f) selective bias in processing information; and (g) failure to work out a contingency plan.

With the extensive, in depth conditions Groupthink contains, some of the reasons why Groupthink has been ignored through empirical research over the years include: (a) group research being difficult to conduct, (b) different interpretations of the Groupthink model which includes strict, additive, and liberal (Turner, Pratkanis, Probasco, & Leve, 1992), and (c) difficult final determinations and connections from antecedents to consequences of the Groupthink (Turner & Pratkanis, 1998).

Empirical Research Studies

Empirical Groupthink studies have included analyses done to include various subsets of the Groupthink model; therefore, studies that parallel school administrative decision making and studies that have been completed without using the Groupthink model in its entirety will be explored within this literature review. These empirical studies include information gathered by Israel, Docekal, and Kasper (2010), Hallgren (2010), Riordan, Riordan, and St. Pierre (2008), Erdem (2003), Ahlfinger and Esser (2001), Hodson and Sorrentino (1997), Bernthal and Insko (1993), Callaway, Marriott, and Esser (1985), Leana (1985), Fodor and Smith (1982), and Flowers (1977).

Israel, Docekal, and Kasper (2010) found that cohort models geared toward the adult learner within educational leadership preparation programs are subject to Groupthink. Additionally, professors of the cohort model within these preparation programs need to understand that the group is susceptible to Groupthink and they also

need to “learn the signs of Groupthink as well as how to use Groupthink breaching strategies to provide optimal learning for future educational leaders” (p. 35).

Hallgren (2010) focused on the symptoms of Groupthink and its application to temporary organizations. He found that short term organizations are subject to Groupthink, therefore group dynamics always need to be considered so that Groupthink is limited and/or not applied to its organization.

Riordan, Riordan, and St. Pierre (2008) found within their research that accounting educators are not acknowledging or addressing the potential influences of Groupthink during students group work; these researchers recognize that Groupthink has the potential to affect the quality of decisions.

Erdem (2003) proposed that there is an optimal level of trust in many team situations, but too much trust can impact negatively on performance. This research found that having a high degree of trust increased the risk of Groupthink for the team. Therefore in order to maximize the performance of teams that have high levels of trust for one-another, critical inquiry, constructive criticism, and supportive understanding must be present during decision making.

Ahlfinger and Esser (2001) found that within group work, groups with promotional leaders produced more symptoms of Groupthink, discussed fewer facts, and reached a decision more quickly than groups with non-promotional leaders.

Hodson and Sorrentino (1997) examine how Groupthink theory explains how situational conditions influence group decision making. These researchers found that Groupthink can be lessened by avoiding their leader's biased information when making a group decision.

Bernthal and Insko (1993) asked participants to indicate the degree to which they experienced the symptoms of Groupthink after completing a decision-making task. Their result showed that the combination of low social-emotional and high task-oriented cohesion resulted in the lowest perception of Groupthink symptoms, but groups with high social-emotional cohesion were more likely to experience Groupthink symptoms.

Callaway, Marriott, and Esser (1985) analyzed dominant power as a way to increase quality of decisions, and results indicated that groups composed of highly dominant members made higher quality decisions, exhibited lower states of anxiety, took more time to reach a decision, made more statements of disagreement and agreement within the group during the decision making process.

Leana (1985) focused on leadership style and its insignificance with predicting vulnerability to Groupthink. She found that members of non-cohesive groups engaged in more self-censorship of information, teams with directive leaders proposed and discussed fewer alternative solutions, and groups with directive leaders were willing to comply with the leaders' proposed solution if the leader stated their preference prior to the conclusion of the decision making process.

Fodor and Smith (1982) examined leadership with dominant power as a motivator and found that it was the leaders that scored low on their 'power motive' survey who brought more factual information to group discussion and considered more action proposals from the group; they found that this led to improved group participation for decision making.

Flowers (1977) showed that groups with an open-leadership style produced significantly more suggested solutions during the decision making process regardless of differing levels of cohesiveness within the group.

These empirical studies parallel school administrative decision making and have been completed without using the Groupthink model in its entirety. These empirical research studies examine the Groupthink phenomenon, but Groupthink has also been widely studied and applied to many group decision making situations through various historical events.

Historical Examples and Case Studies

Studies of historical cases involving this Groupthink phenomenon have been examined both nationally and internationally. Nationally, Groupthink has been studied through a variety of occurrences, but the ones included in this literature illustrate how it has been applied through business, scientific, and political decision making, including the Ford Motor Company's decision to create and promote the Edsel, NASA's decision to launch the Challenger space shuttle, the Son Tay rescue attempt, and the Carter Administration's decision to use military procedures to rescue Iranian hostages. Additionally, internationally with some affiliation by the United States, Groupthink has been studied in Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union and the Malaccan Strait pirate/terrorist attacks.

Ford Motor Company. In September of 1957, Ford Motor Company released a new vehicle called the Edsel, and within two years of this release “the word ‘Edsel’ had become convenient shorthand for any massive and embarrassingly public failure” (Dicke, 2010, p. 486). The Edsel failed simply because it was not bought by consumers;

therefore with new company leadership and change in corporate strategy, plans to recover this loss were not an option. There were many reasons why the Edsel was so unpopular, but the two main reasons included cost and design. Dicke noted that once the negative reactions of the vehicle hit the general population, it was difficult for the company to have consumers give it a second chance. Consumers felt that they could afford to reject this \$250 million investment made by the United States automaker because they had faith that the auto industry could absorb the loss, but also come up with something that is more in tune with their tastes (Dicke, 2010). “The Edsel is most accurately remembered not as a product failure but as a powerful example of the potential hazards of strategic waffling” (p. 486). Esser (1998) describes how Huseman and Driver (1979) concluded that five of the eight symptoms of Groupthink were present within Ford’s decision making process, which includes invulnerability, rationalization, stereotypes, self-censorship, and unanimity.

NASA and the *Challenger*. The Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik in 1957 engaged the United States in the race to space. Despite several levels of safety measures not being conducted before the launch, the United States decided to launch their space shuttle *Challenger* in 1986. These ignored safety measures, including appropriate flight position monitoring and O-ring corrosion (Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger, 1986), caused the *Challenger* to explode seconds after liftoff. These safety measures were unknown to the people, and Lindee and Nelkin (1986) suggested that over the years the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) used the press as the medium to transfer information from Congress to the public. Here journalists were receptive to NASA’s prepackaged information, but also extremely vulnerable to

manipulation. Therefore, once this tragic event took place, the credibility of the press and the trust the public had in American technological enterprises was damaged (Lindee & Nelkin, 1986).

Howell (2012) states that the *Challenger* was one of NASA's greatest triumphs because it was the second shuttle to reach space after successfully completing nine missions, but it was also NASA's darkest tragedy. Moorhead, Ference, and Neck (1991) found that all eight symptoms of Groupthink were present during the decision making process, whereas Esser (1995) and Dimitroff, Schmidt and Bond (2005) concluded only five symptoms were present, including rationalization, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards. The three Groupthink symptoms in which Esser (1995) and Dimitroff et al. (2005) found nonexistent within this historical event include: invulnerability, morality, and stereotypes.

Son Tay rescue attempt. Gargus (2007) participated in the planning of the Son Tay rescue and also flew as a lead navigator for the strike force to recover American prisoners of war in November of 1970 during the Vietnam War. The well-planned, well-trained defense force performed a raid which ended up being a failed rescue attempt due to the absence of American prisoners at the camp. Nixon's intelligence failed to conclude that the Son Tay camp located in North Vietnam was empty; these prisoners of war had been moved to another camp prior to the raid. Liennane (2010) explains that this raid is still studied by U.S. Army Special Forces because of the masterful execution of those that attempted the rescue, but researcher Amidon (2005) concludes that the failed attempt was due to the presence of all eight Groupthink symptoms.

Carter administration's rescue. In November of 1979, 52 Americans were held hostage after a group of Islamist militants took over the American Embassy in Tehran. President Carter (1982) wrote that when he had a message from Jordan that there was no possibility that continued negotiations would lead to a release of the hostages, his resolution of a rescue mission was strengthened. Additionally, in order to disprove skepticism that Carter was not a firm presidential leader, a hostage rescue attempt was scheduled to start on the night of April 24, 1980 (Smith, 1985). This rescue attempt included traveling to Iran with at least six helicopters, traveling to Tehran, overpowering the incarcerators at the Embassy, and then releasing the hostages. Unfortunately, the rescue force never got beyond the initial staging post in Iran. This occurred because weak points in the rescue attempt were not examined in detail by political leaders even though they were acknowledged during meetings leading up the rescue attempt (Smith, 1985). There were definite weak points in the plan that should have been noticed before the final planning stage (Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Operations Review Group, 1980) and with the lack of preparation, rescuers died in the process. Rose (2011) recognized that Smith (1984) and Tetlock et al. (1992) identified the presence of all eight symptoms of Groupthink within the decision making process for this event that caused American military casualties.

Nazi Germany's invasion. Dictator Josef Stalin received detailed information about Nazi Germany's plan to invade the Soviet Union in 1941, but ignored the warnings. Ignoring the warnings failed to prepare the Soviets for the war that Adolf Hitler ordered on the Soviet Union during World War II. Part of Stalin's resistance to prepare for an attack came from previous non-aggression pacts that were signed between Germany and

the Soviet Union in 1939 (Stalin had word of Hitler's plan for German invasion of USSR, 1989). As the Germans began and continued their path to conquer, the Soviet population began to destroy anything that would allow for the Germans to become successful in their domination.

During the war, Hitler's generals wanted to capture Moscow as soon as possible, but Hitler denied his generals' requests and ordered the German army to wait until more forces came to help in their domination. This added time gave the Soviet's the opportunity to strengthen their own army, and by December, German troops suffered significantly because of the wait that was implemented during the cold winter months. This allowed for the Soviets to counterattack and eventually defeat Nazi Germany. Consequently, when examining both sides of this war, both leaders were particularly set in their own beliefs that they ignored warning signs and strategic planning, which in turn caused for thousands of casualties. Rose (2011) highlighted in Ahlstrom and Wang (2009) research that the presence of all eight Groupthink symptoms which "contributed significantly" within this historical event of Germany's attack (p. 173).

South Malaccan Piracy. Nurbiansyah, Abdulmani, Sujairi, and Wahab (2012) examined the Strait of Malacca, which is a water passageway that has been used heavily for commercial trade, and is located between Sumatra and Malaysia/Singapore. This waterway is narrow, contains an abundance of islets, and is a channel for many rivers; and although it is a great avenue for vessels, these combined traits allow for pirates and/or terrorists to hide, capture, and escape easily. The Strait of Malacca is known as one of the world's most pirate/terrorist hotspots, which causes major concern for companies using the passage (Hays, 2012).

Due to the size of the vessels that carry commercial items, it limits the speed and maneuverability of the ship within the passage. This is the perfect positioning for pirates and/or terrorists to gain access to the items on the vessel and flee without capture. Hays (2012) explores the three incarnations that exist in this passageway, including: (a) gangs that board vessels to rob the crews, (b) multinational organizations that steal the entire ship, and (c) guerrilla groups that kidnap seamen for ransom.

After the attacks on the United States, September 11, 2001, “Japan and the United States indicated a desire to participate in enhancing security in the waterway. However, it was not until 2004 that real steps toward securing the strait were made” (Raymond, 2009, p. 35) because of countermeasures introduced by Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Raymond continued by stating that while piracy was a great concern in the past, the number of cases involving this piracy issue has been falling since 2005. Although, with all of the knowledge and warnings involved with the decision to discontinue the use of this passageway, vessels continue to take the risk of traveling through the strait, creating the presence of invulnerability, rationalization, pressure, self-censorship, and unanimity Groupthink symptoms.

Roman influence. The Groupthink phenomenon has been explored throughout history, and when considering ancient Rome, the Roman Forum was a place where explicit teachings of conformity existed. The Roman Forum was considered to be the center of Roman life, and in this Roman society confirmation of others was not only sought, but it was required. DuPoint (1989) indicated that forum was the center of people power because it was there where the people congregated, and by having this as a common place, the Romans were able to strengthen their sense of belonging to a

community. Nardo (2001) identified how the Roman society continually subjected its people to new processes of assimilation in order to keep the Roman society focused on past tradition and preservation rather than future innovation, which invited the existence of all eight symptoms of Groupthink within its community.

Carcopino (1940) agrees that “instead of witnessing a logical and gradual evolution which would have demonstrated the value of imperial institutions, the Romans continued to endure the civil degradation entailed by arbitrary and drastic inversion of class and roles” (p. 64). Citizens within this Roman society were separated by their superiority and their position was determined by their fortunes. In the event of a committed crime, those who were less fortunate faced severe and humiliating punishments, whereas those who had more fortune were spared punishments which would degrade their position in the eyes of the people. Although this Roman society thrived on the ideas of honor and shame, members within the Roman society had their own role and participated within the larger community. DuPoint (1989) argued that it was the forum which made the voice of the masses sacred, and in order “to stand between himself and the world, a Roman needed some form of community” (p. 9).

Community and Culture

The teachings of the Roman culture included leadership styles very different from the current society. In fact, unlike leadership during ancient Roman times, leading researchers in the field (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2005; Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2006; Senge, 1990, Sergiovanni, 1984) believe that the leaders of today look for innovative ways to improve their organization, inspire a shared vision, enable others to collaborate, is a role model

and motivator, and encourages people by recognizing other's contributions. These combined traits create a community and culture for a successful growing organization.

Community

Hoy and Miskel (2010) claim that an organizational culture shares values, norms, philosophies, perspectives, expectations, attitudes, myths, and trends that give it a distinctive identity that holds its units together. These units create a community, and the word "community" originates from the Latin term *communis*, which means common relations, fellowship, or feelings. (Hines, Welch, & Hopkins, 1966). Minar and Greer (1969) connect community and culture by stating that:

culture and community are concepts that have much in common. We have used the term community to refer to a group, united in space, function, or other interest, and sharing perspectives that bind them together for some degree of common action. Culture is the more inclusive term, for it does not necessarily unite, but a community both develops a culture and draws from it. (p. 472)

Sergiovanni (1994) writes that communities are collections of individuals who are bonded and bound together, by natural will and by a set of shared ideas and ideals, respectively. He further states that this bonding and binding shares with it a common place in which over a period of time common sentiments and traditions are continued. "People want community, want a sense of belonging. They want something to believe in and to be a part of...they want a community of which they are a part" (Lutz & Merz, 1992, pp. 34-35).

Wood and Judikis (2002) define community as "a group of people who have a sense of common purpose(s) and/or interest(s) for which they assume mutual responsibility; who acknowledge their interconnectedness; who respect the individual

differences among members; and who commit themselves to the well-being of each other, and the integrity and well-being of the group” (p. 12). Additionally, Dewey (1966) wrote:

There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding – like-mindedness as the sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks; they cannot be shared as persons would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions – like ways of responding to expectations and requirements. Persons do not become a society by living in physical proximity, any more that a man ceases to be socially influenced by being so many feet or miles from others. A book or a letter may institute a more intimate association between human beings separated thousands of miles from each other than exists between dwellers under the same roof. Individuals do not even compose a social group because they all work for a common end. The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community. (p. 5)

Deal and Peterson (1999) connect community and school describing schools as “museums of virtue, storehouses of memories, and prime sources of local pride. People look to schools as a wellspring of hope. They look for assurance that local values are being transmitted and that the future will bear some connection with traditions of the past” (p. 129). Witten, McGregor, and Kearns (2007) add that schools are considered to be central community facilities and Sayer, Beaven, Stringer, and Hermena (2013) believes that schools play an important role in “forming and maintaining constructive geographical and relational communities” (p. 9). Furthermore, Dewey (1966) states:

that the only way in which adults consciously control the kind of education which the immature get is by controlling the environment in which they act, and hence

think and feel. As soon as a community depends to a considerable extent upon what lies beyond its own territory and its own immediate generation, it must rely upon the set agency of schools to insure adequate transmission of all its resources. (p. 8)

Culture

“Over time, the norms and values are transformed into deeply-rooted ways of behaving or interacting with each other and taken-for-granted assumptions which are the essence of organizational culture” (Deenmamode, 2011, p. 306). The term culture is used to describe behaviors among different tribes, societies, and ethnic groups, but this concept of culture has also been used by social scientists to describe patterns of behavior within a formal work setting (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Fullan (2001) states that, “what makes humans different is culture . . . [which] can be passed on by direct infection from one person to another” (p. 15). For that reason, this concept of culture within a formal work setting of a school can be seen among the students, teachers, administrators, and parents. School culture is the transmission of meanings that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by members of the school community (Short & Greer, 2002). Therefore, “organizations, especially schools, are products of the cultural paradigm of the society in which they exist” (Turan & Betkas, 2013, p. 156).

Hoy and Miskel (1996) state that the study of culture is focused on identifying the sense, character, or image of an organization. Culture is the shared system of beliefs and values that bind a community together, and “whether weak or strong, culture has a powerful influence throughout the organization” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 2). Culture can be identified within groups so that basic assumptions and beliefs are shared by

members of an organization, even when the beliefs evolve from new experiences over time (Schein, 1985).

Schein (1985) continues to argue that among leaders, founders of organizations play the most important role in creating culture. He believes that these founders select the mission, the environmental context, the group members, and consider the group's initial actions to ensure success. Therefore, when it comes to the educational setting "it is up to school leaders – principals, teachers, and often parents – to help identify, shape, and maintain strong, positive, student-focused culture" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28).

"Cultures are formed from an unusual point of view, refined and strengthened by internal and external challenges, and led by a portfolio of people with complementary skills" (Herzlinger, 1999, p. 112). Schein (1985) believes that organizational cultures "begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group" (p. 1). He states that "one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation of culture. Culture and leadership... are two sides of the same coin. In fact, there is a possibility... that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture, and the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture" (p. 2). Durukan (2006) further states that when shared vision is combined with coherence in a culture, it makes the vision more achievable which allows school leaders and their employees to turn the vision into action.

School Administration

Msila (2013) claims that "an effective school culture is largely dependent upon the goals set by management. A lack of strong leadership, lack of vision and commitment and an absence of clear rules are some of the aspects that lead to weak schools with weak

culture” (p. 99). Additionally, “effective leaders understand how to balance pushing for change while, at the same time, protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving... They know when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed” (AdvancED, 2007, pp. 7-8). Therefore, in order for leaders to work with culture, they need to be able to understand the community and culture in which their educational institution lies.

The School Board and Superintendent

“School-community interactions facilitate connections between schools and their local surroundings,” (Castco & Sipple, 2011, p. 134) so characteristics of a community are seen in the type of leaders that appear within that community, and when members of a community elect their school board members, they do so to uphold the community’s values. Davis (2010) reviews that community members elect school board members so that they can carry out the wishes of the community, provide the utmost quality of education for their children, and protect and preserve the local culture that had previously been established. While the members of school board carry with them this power, they are usually unpaid and untrained. Therefore, school boards have historically relied on the professional judgment of the superintendent in handling educational matters.

During the mid-1600’s, boards of education were used by aspiring politicians to build support in order to seek a higher office (Bullard & Taylor, 1993); and until the creation of the position of superintendent in 1837, school board members handled all aspects of a school. As schools grew during the end of the nineteenth century, school boards began to realize that they needed a superintendent to oversee the daily operations

of the educational institution because of the increase in the size and complexity of school districts (Danforth Foundation, 1992; Flinchbaugh, 1993; Sharp & Walter, 1997). Even though “school boards are representative bodies, they are expected to defer to the expertise of the superintendent and choose the “best” educational policies regardless of community preferences” (Greene, 1992, p. 220).

“Most superintendents find themselves in trouble when they are out of step with the social, civic, and public expectations of the community in which they practice” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 130). This happens when there is more of an emphasis placed on effective school district leadership, because the relationship between school boards and their superintendents become more critical (Allison, Allison, & McHenry, 1995; Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Thomas, 2001). The dynamics of this interaction is the most important factor that contributes to their ability to successfully manage the district (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Nygren, 1992).

Previous research has shown that a poor relationship between the superintendent and the board of education deters school improvement (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992), affects the quality of educational programs (Boyd, 1976; Nygren, 1992), and weakens district stability and morale (Renchler, 1992). This also negatively influences the superintendent’s credibility and trustworthiness with board members (Peterson & Short, 2001), impedes critical reform efforts (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995), and hinders collaborative visioning and long-range planning (Kowalski, 1999).

The successful superintendent must be proficient at building and sustaining good relations with the school board (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001), and one of the main elements of being successful in the role of the superintendent is the development of

shared mission and goals with the board. With that, the superintendent has the ability to understand the board's expectations in order to effectively transfer the community's values into the school district. Although, in order to effectively reach this shared mission, the key to a superintendent's success is also in their ability to inspire others to take on leadership roles and assume different responsibilities all while working collaboratively toward a shared vision of improving education for students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

Human Resource Management

Losey, Meisinger, and Ulrich (2005) feel that effective leadership is considered to be a critical element behind a vision in an organization; and Rebores (2011) explains how human resource management ensures that a school district, "has the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time" (p. 93). As a result, when human resource management hires a candidate for a leadership position within its educational organization, many challenges are present.

Bottger and Barsoux (2012) claim that hiring the right people to hold a leadership position is one of the greatest challenges for an organization. DeNisi and Griffin (2012) feel that making hiring decisions for leadership positions is different for each position within each organization; and Lawler (2008) notes that hiring the right people within an organization require establishing the right fit between the people, position, and culture. To do this, an organization needs to understand whether it would be favorable to hire a candidate willing and able to enact change for the organization. If change is needed, Cohen and Pfeffer (1986) recommend to institute selective hiring practices which includes "having a larger applicant pool, be clear about what are the most critical skills

and attributes needed in the applicant pool, skills and abilities need to be carefully considered and consistent, and screen primarily on important attributes that are difficult to change through training” (pp. 100-101).

Charlton and Kritsonis (2010) affirms this process so that an organization can hire a candidate that would best fit the organization so that his/her skills would be advantageous to the organization. Although, whether the advantage for the organization is to hire someone that is going to be a change agent or not, it is important for an organization to have a clear vision of what is needed in a candidate for the success of the organization. Collins (2001) feels that in order to transform a good organization into a great organization, the key is to put the right people in the right position. This will allow for the organization to enact this good-to-great change within its own system, by its own people.

West and Derrington (2009) state that in order for school leaders to transform their organization and apply change during the changing times, it “need[s] a platoon of highly effective people to march forward” (p. 17). DeBlois (2000) argues that good leaders recognize and depend upon the talent, commitment, and leadership of many within the school organization. Therefore, when values, goals and priorities are established before a candidate is selected for a building leader position, it provides a district with clear, measurable expectations of the instructional leader. “Only when leaders know what is expected and only when that knowledge is broadly shared throughout the organization can there be a reasonable expectation that leadership performance will improve” (Reeves, 2009, p. 19).

When looking at education as an organization, it is imperative to monitor the progress of leaders. Instructional leaders make daily decisions that influence their entire organization, and meaningful evaluations are designed to facilitate successful leadership. When leaders do not receive constructive criticism, then they are not able to improve their institution, and this negatively affects the progress of the entire school. Building principals should continually use their evaluations and also use “reflection, combined with personal vision and an internal system of values, [because this] becomes the basis of leadership strategies and actions” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 7). This quote relates to one of the twelve Code of Ethics standards that the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) established for educational leaders, stating that an educational leader “makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making” (AASA’s Statement, 2007).

With decision making comes levels of standards and quality; therefore, the first step in acquiring a culturally proficient leader would be to define the expectations for a building leader so that there is an increase in student achievement. When these values, goals and priorities are established before a candidate is selected for a building leader position, it provides a district with clear, measurable expectations of the instructional leader. “Excellent administrators have a clear sense of their own unique purpose in life” (Ventures for Excellence, 2008, p. 1) and through their own values, they can advocate for that purpose. Additionally, “successful leaders consistently make the right choices and are trusted by those they lead. Their confidence is contagious, and they allow others to make good decisions as well” (Hachiya, 2014, p. 6).

Five Sources of Authority for Learning/ Purposing

In a study done by Waters and Marzano (2006), it was determined that a statistically significant relationship exists between district-level leadership and student achievement. Since the superintendent has the power to influence decision making within school leaders, it is important for each individual to know his/her own values and beliefs so that he/she can find a leadership position within a school that follows his/her own personal views on education. Also, while within the educational organization, an instructional leader may begin to establish a specific type of authority he/she is comfortable. Sergiovanni (1992) describes the *Five Sources of Authority for Leadership* as well as their characteristics as the following:

1. Bureaucratic Authority: Micromanaging
Teachers are subordinates
Expect and inspect,
Teacher performance is narrowed
Who should I follow?
2. Psychological Authority: What is rewarded gets done
Congenial climate
Performance is narrowed
Why should I follow?
3. Technical Authority: Evidence defined by logic and scientific research
Use research to identify best practice
Performance is narrowed
What and how I should do something?
4. Professional Authority: Teachers respond in light of common socialization
Professional values
Accepted tenets of practice
Accepted tenets of internalized expertise
Performance is expansive
What is rewarding gets done
5. Moral Authority: Communities are defined by shared values

Beliefs and commitments
 People are motivated by emotions
 Use of purposing
 School autonomy leads to covenantal communities
 Performance is enhanced and sustained
 What is good gets done

Sergiovanni (1992) established these sources of authority for leadership because “we have come to view leadership as behavior rather than action, as something psychological rather than spiritual, as having to do with persons rather than ideas” (p. 3) and “this has all led to overemphasis on doing things right as opposed to doing the right thing” (p. 4) “One of the great secrets of leadership is that before one can command the respect and followership of others, she or he must demonstrate devotion to the organization’s purposes and commitment to those in the organization who work day by day on the ordinary tasks that are necessary for those purposes to be realized” (p. 334). Additionally, Sergiovanni claims that “the leader works with others to get them to do what the leader wants them to do and in some cases, is able to get them to enjoy doing it” (p. 43).

When an organization commits to act on their shared system of beliefs, the organization is transformed into a covenantal community (Sergiovanni, 1992). “A covenantal community is a group of people who share religious or ethical beliefs, feel a strong sense of place, and think that the group is more important than the individual” (pp. 102-103). The role of the leader in a covenantal community is to practice purposing, which calls for the leader to induce clarity, consensus and commitment to the community’s basic purposes. Although, when this covenantal community is established,

leaders must be aware of the explicit, implicit and null curricula that follow decision making for student achievement.

Explicit, Implicit, Null

When looking at educational leadership and the process of decision making, one needs to consider all factors, starting with the purpose of the action for the decision and continuing through the implementation and practice of the decision. Eisner (1985) suggests that schools teach three curricula: the explicit (obvious and stated), implicit (unofficial, hidden, both intentional and inadvertent), and null (non-existing curriculum that is not taught, that is systematically excluded, neglected or not considered (Joseph, Bravemann, Windschitl, & Mikel, 2000, pp. 3-4).

In an instructional organization, “it becomes clear that what we teach in schools is not always determined by a set of decisions that have entertained alternatives; rather, the subjects that are now taught are a part of a tradition, and traditions create expectations, they create predictability, and they sustain stability” (Eisner, 1985, p. 105). Although, federal and state regulations demand for greater accountability on the part of the schools, and with these demands, there are obstacles that school districts deal with on a daily basis. Some of these obstacles include changing demographics, competing community interests, limited resources, legal challenges, political agendas, and a general disrespect for the education profession. These hindrances create an increasingly difficult environment for educators to remain focused and be successful with accomplishing the goals of increasing student achievement (Usdan, McCloud, Podmostko, & Cuban, 2001).

Four Areas of Educational Decision Making

Crow (2007) and Bush (2009) emphasized the increase of challenges the school leader faces due to the increase of complexity within the school organization regarding how schools operate, how responsibilities have devolved, and how schools are subjected to high performance standards. Additionally, Fine and McNamara (2011) state that

in the 21st century, in an era of wars, terrorism, natural disasters, financial uncertainty and high-stakes testing, educational leaders are faced with even more daunting decision-making difficulties than in a more tranquil period. Educational leaders now face profound decisions regarding their classrooms, schools, and school districts, in an ever-changing and challenging world. (p. 266)

There are many areas of educational decision making that require educational leaders to reflect upon and make decisions for on a daily basis, although the four areas of educational decision making in which this study focused include curriculum offered, assessment requirements, discipline matters, and safety procedures. Leaders make decisions based on state and federal regulations, their own personal beliefs as values, as well as, maintaining the school district and community's sentiments and traditions. These four areas of educational decision making are reevaluated within districts on a regular basis in order for there to exist the best policies and practices for the stakeholders of the district.

Curriculum

In 1957, the launch of Sputnik caused the nation to focus on the importance of academically rigorous content and prompted the United States government to provide federal funds to support the development of the specific curricula needed for our nation to remain competitive (Glatthorn, Boschee & Whitehead, 2006). Some of these federal funding included The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 and the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The NDEA was passed by Congress to allocate funds to enhance weaknesses in curricula that related to national defense and national security in the subject areas of mathematics, science, and foreign languages (Ornstein & Levine, 1993); whereas the ESEA was designed to respond to the social changes taking place in our public schools and create supplemental programs for low-income families (Ornstein & Levine, 1993).

These examples of federal funding allocations for school programming changed each educational institution's effort to reform curriculum (Kliebard, 1995). This federal involvement created a more controlled process for curriculum revision in which "curriculum would be developed by experts at a center set up for that purpose with the local school systems perceived as consumers of external initiatives" (p. 229). This was a considerable change in our educational history because academic scholars now felt compelled to participate in the construction of public school curriculum (Glatthorn et al., 2006).

Jerome Bruner, author of *The Process of Education* (1960), promoted "learning how to learn" and "transfer of learning" (p. 12). Bruner believed that the quick development of knowledge "made it impossible for a student to know everything" therefore the school needed to strategically use the time in the day to understand and apply broad principles (Glatthorn et al., 2006, p. 45).

Marzano (2003) identified "eleven school, teacher, and student factors that are primary determinants of student achievement" (p. 58), and the greatest school-level factor Marzano identified was a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Shen et al.'s (2012) research confirmed the validity of Marzano's 11 factor model, and when a viable curriculum is

aligned, comprehensive, and effectively delivered, it can lead to increased student success (Crommey, 2000; Eisner, 1982; English & Steffy, 2001; Hirsch, 1996; Marzano, 2003; Shen et al., 2012).

Tyler (1949) states that in addressing curricular design educators should answer the following questions:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (pp. 1-2)

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009) the phrase “core academic subjects” refers to “English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography” (p. 1). Over the past few years in Illinois, there has been a shift from implementing the Illinois State Standards to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. “The Common Core State Standards focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades... and clearly communicates what is expected of students at each grade level” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) was a collaborative effort of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). A group of governors and state commissioners collaborated with educational experts, local administrators, teachers and parents to establish the K-12 common core standards for English-language arts and mathematics (Paine & Schleicher, 2011) that is to be used by states across the nation.

Common Core State Standards developed as a result of research on learning trajectories and their expected enhancements on student learning (Confrey, 2012). The anticipated outcome of the Common Core Standards consists of a higher expectation of student progress each year due to the fact that there is a consistent vertical alignment in the core academic areas for all schools (Confrey & Maloney, 2011). This approach will create equity in education by standardizing the content and performance standards for all schools (Noddings, 2007). This initiative provides national control over the quality of academic standards, all while allowing a school district to design their own curriculum and instructional methods (Goertz, 2007; Rothman, 2011).

In addition to curricular changes that meet the Common Core State Standards, the state of Illinois currently requires for a high school student to take:

- 2 years of writing-intensive courses, one year of which must be offered as an English language arts course and may be counted toward meeting one year of the four-year English language arts requirement. The writing courses may be counted toward the fulfillment of other state graduation requirements, when applicable, if writing-intensive content is provided in a subject area other than English language arts;
- 3 years of mathematics, one of which must be Algebra 1 and one of which must include geometry content;
- 2 years of science;
- 2 years of social studies, of which at least one year must be the history of the United States or a combination of the history of the United States and American government; and
- 1 year chosen from any of the following:
 - art;
 - music;
 - foreign language, which shall include American Sign Language; and
 - vocational education (105 ILCS 5/27)

Hence, in conjunction with the Common Core State Standards, these course requirements will allow for a curricular vertical alignment to ensure daily instruction that delivers the content and skills necessary for consecutive grade levels (Mathiesen, 2008, p.

31). This type of alignment will help districts to make sure there are no gaps, repetitions, or redundancies at different grade levels so that there is a smooth application of the curriculum (Jacobs, 2003; Udelhofen, 2005). When curriculum is organized around specific learning objectives and when data is collected and acted upon in relation to those specific learning objectives, or standards, student performance improves (Mathiesen, 2008, p. 34).

Assessment

Hirsch (1996) noted, “frequent repetitions and gaps are the besetting weaknesses of local curricula” (p. 29). A curriculum gap exists when there is any difference between the content standards and the actual written, taught, and tested curriculum. Tyler (1949) stated that analyzing for gaps in a curriculum was the critical piece of curriculum development: “the process of evaluation is essentially the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realized by the program of curriculum and instruction” (pp. 105-106). The data that is collected from formative and summative assessments can then be used to identify and correct these gaps, which ultimately impacts the written curriculum (Crommey, 2000; English, 2000).

Chappuis and Chappuis (2008) described formative assessment as an “ongoing, dynamic process that involves far more than frequent testing and measurement of student learning is just one of its components” (p. 15). Formative assessment provides educators with feedback during instruction so that changes still can be made during teaching (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2008; Perie, Marion, & Gong, 2007). Popham (2006) argued that formative assessments “need to have the results in sufficient time to adjust—that is, form—ongoing instruction and learning” (p. 86).

Summative assessments are tools for evaluating whether a student has mastered the presented material. Perie Marion and Gong (2007) noted, “summative assessments are given one time at the end of the semester of school year to evaluate students’ performance against a defined set of content standards” (p. 3). The results from these summative assessments are used to determine a student’s grade or placement, to measure program effectiveness, or to rate the progress of schools and districts (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2008).

Without alignment between the written, taught, and tested curricula, student achievement can suffer (English, 2000) and “to improve pupil test performance, it is necessary to improve the match between the curriculum content and test content. This means ‘tightening’ the relationship between what becomes the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and its ‘alignment’ to the tested curricula” (p. 12). To do this in the educational setting, educational leaders must work together to provide a viable curriculum so that testing aligns to the subject matter being presented. Furthermore, “policy makers increasingly place tremendous faith in the power of data to move practice, but the fate of policy makers’ efforts will depend in great measure on the very practice they want to move” (Spillane, 2012, p. 113). Additionally, Dobbins, Rosenbaum, Plews, Law, and Fysh (2007) and Maynard (2007) found that managers and other leaders rely on their own experiences, opinions of colleagues, and research evidence to make the best informed decision for their organization.

Although team experiences and opinions aid in creating the best decision for an organization, Halvorsen (2010) adds that with data “assessing various forms of information or evidence is a significant part of team decision making (p.286). Datnow,

Park and Wohlsette (2007) stated that, “if you don’t examine the data and look deeply at the root causes, you might just be solving the wrong problem or addressing the problem the wrong way. And in the end, that won’t help the students” (p. 27). This idea can require instructional leaders to consider other forms achievement inhibitors, such as classroom management issues.

Discipline

When educational leaders consider how to effectively educate students, it becomes necessary to gain a better understanding of student discipline problems within the school district. Arum and Ford (2012) found that it is a challenge for schools to provide the right kind of discipline and create a climate that nurtures learning within every country, and a school’s disciplinary climate is the product of educators’ beliefs and actions, students’ beliefs and actions, the interaction of these, and the legal and social context of the country (p. 56). “Addressing the high rates of discipline problems in U.S. schools will certainly require a shift to disciplinary techniques (both formal and informal) that have the broad support of the teachers, parents, and students themselves. For discipline to be effective, students and parents must perceive it as legitimate” (p. 60). Therefore, by identifying specific areas of concern within an educational organization, educational leaders can then design and implement appropriate interventions to address the problem that was identified (Royal, 2003). Clearly defined discipline policies will provide a student with the expectations for appropriate behavior, but will also establish which behaviors are inappropriate and not tolerated (Paige, 2001) to create a school climate conducive for learning.

According to Sterrett (2012), “teachers and school leaders cannot merely advocate for better relationships or an improved climate; we must use proven strategies that set students up for success” (p. 72) which include promoting a positive vision, creating classroom communities, providing extra support, and building consistent relationships. Extra support for disciplinary issue incorporate creating a behavioral design that students will need to follow which addresses appropriate behavior for school. Instructional leaders need to consider what constitutes appropriate behavior and the degree of consequence a student is to endure once a rule has been broken. Ediger (2013) states “there may be cases where special procedures need emphasis... [and] each school board should possess a manual in the arena of discipline” (p. 17). These varying degrees of consequences seen within school board manuals consist of reprimands, time-outs, detentions, school suspensions, out of school suspensions, and expulsion.

Reprimands, time-outs, and detentions have a smaller degree of consequence applied to them. First, a reprimand is defined as an expression of disapproval as a result of displayed inappropriate behavior (Van Houten, 1980). According to Sprick, Sprick, and Garrison (1993), reprimands are used most effectively when students do not recognize that a behavior is inappropriate, or when students may be unaware that they are engaging in inappropriate behavior. Second, a time-out serves as a negative consequence for misbehavior by removing a student from positive social environment for a specific amount of time (Sprick et al., 1993). Lastly, a detention can be one of the most effective disciplinary strategies, but it is used the least because of the cost and time demands placed on the school and staff (Hyman & Snook, 1999; Rosen, 1997). Since detentions

typically occur outside of the school day, this causes a school to supply more resources to correct the behavior of a student.

A school suspension, an out of school suspension, and an expulsion have no added costs for the school and are considered to have a higher degree of consequence; but these consequences are only effective if the environment in which the student is placed is significantly less interesting and reinforcing than the environment from which the student is removed (Christle, 2003; Costenbader & Markson, 1998). Brown (2007) found that students who are suspended and expelled have a history of poor academic experiences, therefore being required to leave school for an amount of time is not a punishment. Dupper, Theriot, and Craun (2009) also confirm this and believes that for some students a suspension is a reinforcer instead of a deterrent; therefore “suspensions can have serious unintended negative consequences for the suspended student across a range of domains including educational outcomes and problem behaviors” (Hemphill, 2014, p. 188).

A suspension requires the student to continue to receive educational services throughout the day, but also allows for the following actions of (a) isolating the student at the school, (b) providing a cooling-off period for the student, (c) protecting of the rest of the students, (d) holding a parent conference, and (e) teaching students that there are consequences to their actions (Paige, 2001; Radin, 1988). An out of school suspension does not allow a student to receive educational services during the day and requires the student to abstain from participating in any school instruction, activities and/or events for a set period of time. This type of suspension is supposed to represent the last step prior to expulsion, and is among the most common disciplinary consequences used in schools for student behavior problems (Christle, 2003; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). With

these two types of suspensions, the following must be considered before issuing a suspension: (a) severity of the behavior, (b) number of times the behavior occurred, (c) intentionality of the misbehavior, (d) cooperation of the student, and (e) impact on other students (Melland & Seybert, 1996; Paige, 2001).

An expulsion is equivalent to an extended period of suspension and even the possible permanent removal of a student from a school district for displaying a behavior that is considered to be detrimental to the safety and welfare of students and/or school personnel (Rosen, 1997). Garrett (2013) feels that “schools must maintain order if students are to learn, and sometimes it's necessary to remove those who instigate violence and threaten the safety of others” (p. 30).

Discipline has been defined in a number of ways, but each of the following definitions holds with it a greater purpose because it directly relates to school discipline. Discipline has been defined as: (a) the things teachers do to help students behave appropriately in school (Savage, 1990); (b) making students observe rules of conduct that align with the norms that are seen in the adult society (Kohn, 1996); and (c) developing student conduct that does not represent a disruption to the learning process (Moles, 1990).

Researchers indicate that high quality instruction and continuous student learning cannot exist without effective behavior management and student disciplinary practices (Monroe, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Odom, McCormick, & Meyer, 2012), and one of the most significant inhibitors to teacher and student classroom performance is student misbehavior (Ialongo, Kellam, Mayer & Rebok, 1994).

According to Halloway (2002), schools with clearly defined discipline policies are more likely to have more orderly school environments, and these orderly school environments can then foster student achievement. Developing and implementing an effective discipline policy becomes an essential part of maintaining a positive school culture. This practice in schools will positively influence the performances of the students socially and academically during the educational process (Halloway, 2002; Jull, 2000; Kraft, 2004; Paige, 2001). Although when educational leaders practice these policies, they do need to be careful with the implementation because Shook (2012) found that reactive disciplinary strategies can exacerbate behavior problems whereas proactive behavior management strategies can aid in the prevention of a behavior problem.

Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, and Rime (2012) also agrees with this and suggests for educational institutions to use their alternative to suspension model which promotes learning and reduces future incidents of behavioral problems. Rossen and Cowan (2012) feel that creating a safe and supportive school environment is critical to prevent inappropriate student behavior that supports learning and academic achievement. Furthermore, Syversten, Flanagan, and Stout (2009) claim that students who perceive their school as safe and supportive are more likely to report threats to safety.

Safety

Due to inappropriate behavior affecting all aspects of a school, which includes student learning, instruction, achievement, and the school environment (Luiselli, Putnam, & Sunderland, 2002), it is very likely to see school districts developing stricter discipline policies. A safe school provides an environment that allows students, teachers, and administrators to interact in a positive climate that fosters nonthreatening relationships

and personal growth (Bucher & Manning, 2005; Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998; Fein et al., 2002; Furlong, Morrison, & Pavelski, 2000), and Ripski and Gregory (2009) argue that feeling safe at school has been linked to student engagement and academic success.

A 2013 *Education Week* study showed that teachers and school administrators agree that school climate, discipline, and safety are significant factors in educational success (p. 14). Therefore, school policies and practices are intended to address student discipline, but to also address school safety in order to allow for this positive climate to occur. School safety practices include prevention, intervention, and crisis management systems (McCord, Widom, Bamba, & Crowell, 2000) because schools are entrusted with ensuring the safety of students and staff (National Center of Education Statistics, 2004).

Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) wrote that over the past two decades, the role of a school principal has increased in complexity, and now more than ever are school systems focusing on creating a climate where students feel safe. Recently, Cowan and Vaillancourt (2013) reported that

President Obama provided incentives for schools to hire more mental health professionals, enhance school climate, and implement effective school crisis plans as a comprehensive approach to addressing school safety. Also included in his recommendations are opportunities to hire more armed school resource officers, purchase physical security measures, and fund community mental health providers. Congress is seriously considering numerous pieces of legislation to address these issues as well. (p. 19)

There are federal and state initiatives on school safety, but most of them are in the form of guidelines, and not requirements. The federal government enacted the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994, which required a mandatory one year expulsion for any student in possession of a firearm on school property (Brady, 2002), and according to Casella (2003), when a school system was noncompliant with this program, it would jeopardize

the school's Elementary and Secondary Education Act funding. Although the Gun-Free Schools Act required an expulsion, this legislation included a provision which also allowed schools the flexibility to discipline students on a case-by-case basis (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). The flexibility of this zero tolerance legislation allows for a school administrator to modify the length of the expulsion when taking into account circumstances for a first time violation (Stader, 2004).

Additionally, the Safe Schools Act of 1994 provided three million dollars to schools that developed violence prevention programs. The government declared that only five percent of the funds could be used for security measures, and the remaining funds were to be used to link the schools with community organizations with promoting violence prevention (Casella, 2003). In accordance to this, Trump (1998) believes that school partnerships should be formed between schools and local law enforcement agencies because law enforcement agencies can provide the training for staff members and serve as a resource for information. Brydolf (2013) adds that "the best plans are designed by local educational leaders working in partnership with law enforcement, community service providers, students, and families to identify potential problems before they become crises" (p. 8).

Involving community organizations, especially law enforcement, is important when addressing school safety through federal legislation, but it can also be seen within a state's legislation. The Illinois statute, School Safety Drill Act, lists annual requirements that involve local authority participation. These requirements include: (a) at least three school evacuation drills, with only one requiring the presence of the fire department, (b) at least one bus evacuation drill, (c) at least one law enforcement drill, which may take

place on days when students are not present at school, and (d) at least one weather emergency drill (105 ILCS 128/20). Furthermore, Dorn, Thomas, Wong, and Shepherd (2004) emphasizes the importance of “practicing a plan through regular drills and exercises” and having “a system for regular review and update” (p. 21) of the plan so that all are well informed in case of an emergency situation. This is important to consider because “a school’s capacity to respond to a crisis almost always reflects the safety, crisis, and mental health resources that were in place before the crisis” (Cowan & Rossen, 2013, p. 12).

This Illinois statute also requires each public school to conduct an annual school-safety review of each school within the district. This school board review requires the building principal and local emergency responders to be in attendance in order to focus on response plans, safety protocols and procedures, and safety drill programs. Once this review is complete, the school board must sign a report that confirms the completion of the act and that recommendations for improvement will be implemented (105 ILCS 128/25).

Dorn et al. (2004) stress the importance of ‘access control’ for schools, and it is important for a school to have “carefully designed and consistently applied policies and procedures” (p. 82). Cowan and Rossen (2013) state the “best practice reflects our evolution in understanding and encompasses the continuum of crisis and emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery as well as the integration of physical and psychological safety, and the integration of multiple key systems” (p. 11). Therefore in order to make sure a school is safe, Schneider (2005) feels that there are ten essential questions that should be considered when it concerns safe school buildings:

1. Can you see approaching threats?
2. Is the main office designed to serve as the “guardian at the gate?”
3. Can a threatening person be kept from entering the school?
4. Can students easily retreat into the building, away from external threats? Can students playing outdoors regain safety quickly?
5. Does the design protect against internal threats?
6. What school area should serve as a disaster shelter?
7. Does the design guide visitors to the correct entry or delivery area?
8. Is it easy to see activity inside the school?
9. Does this design maximize environmental awareness and personal health?
10. Does the design enhance connectivity between school, teachers, students and the community?

Bomber (2013) writes that “behind every strong school system should be an even stronger security system. Administrators across the nation are on the lookout for new and more cost-effective ways to enhance security on their campuses and provide the safest environment possible for students, faculty and staff” (p. 36). Schwartz (2013) adds that utilizing a safety audit will determine whether a school has adequate security personnel, determine if the security personal has received appropriate training, review the school’s policies and practices regarding security and surveillance, and assess whether an appropriate communication strategies are in place so that the “crisis management plan acts as the first line of defense in cases of security failures and when unforeseen events occur” (p. 38). “School safety and crisis responses are not separate endeavors, but rather they exist on a continuum. Training, planning, and professional development should encompass ongoing prevention and early intervention efforts as well as response and recovery plans in the event the unpreventable occurs” (Cowen & Vaillancourt, 2013, p. 21).

According to Shapiro and Gross (2008) the most difficult decisions are the decisions which are centered around paradoxes and complexities, and Yusof et al. (2011)

found that “today’s ethical leaders are valued for their professionalism and trustworthy decision making” (p. 7). Decisions made around student achievement can be measured and evaluated through a variety of educational areas, but the relationship between curriculum, assessment, discipline and safety allows for the development and maintenance of various programs within a school to maximize student growth academically and socially. Therefore since some districts serve a variety of different communities, it is important for students to gain the same education throughout the district so that consistency of rigorous academia is maintained for all students. Administrators must act with integrity, must act fairly, and must act ethically to ensure the best educational experience for each and every student. In order for this action to take place, administrators making decisions must have a complete understanding of each of these four educational areas before they are asked to make a decision regarding any of them.

The Adult Learner

Making decisions for an instructional institution can be taxing on a person because he/she needs to know how a specific decision can support or hinder his/her cause. Additionally, when working within a team “understanding organizational behavior requires an understanding of the various forms of decision making achieved and aspired to in a given professional setting” (Halvoren, 2010, p. 291). Therefore, understanding how an adult gains new knowledge in order to make informed decisions is important to educational institutions because of the constituents involved with the final group decision.

Principles and/or Tenets

Brookfield (1995), Merriam and Caffarella (1999), and Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) argue that an individual enters a learning situation with a desire of acquiring new skills or knowledge. The adult learner becomes motivated to learn, looks to build on previous experiences, and looks for validation and respect while learning the new skill and/or knowledge. Bridges (2004) suggests that intrinsic and/or extrinsic factors may cause adults to search for new skills or knowledge, and Brookfield (1986) and Merriam (2001) believe that the adult learner will pursue learning when they feel that there is an immediate need. O'Toole and Essex (2012) confirm this by stating that adult learners "seek out learning that is relevant to them at that time" (p. 185). Additionally, researchers Brookfield (1986) and Merriam (2001) found that adult learners want to build upon their previous experiences to develop new learning once they are ready to learn, so that then they can apply their knowledge for problem solving.

Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) developed the core principles of adult learning, such that the leading principle of the learner uses his or her power to initiate the learning. The principles of adult learning are that the learner: (a) seeks learning when he or she needs to know something, (b) is self-directed, (c) uses experience to enhance learning, (d) has a readiness to learn, (e) is oriented to problem solving, and (f) has an intrinsic motivation for learning.

Constructivism

Constructivist theory focuses on how a person creates his/her own understanding of the world by reflecting on personal experiences; and that knowledge is then "constructed" by the individual learner in terms of his/ her own perceptions of the world

(Howard, McGee, Schwartz, & Purcell, 2000). Cleveland (1995) described the ideals of the constructivist view as:

A philosophy of learning founded on the premise that we construct our own understanding of the world we live in through active reflections on our experience. Through this process, we develop “rules” and “mental models” for making sense of the world and guiding our behavior. Learning occurs when we have to adjust our mental constructions to take into account new information in our environment that doesn’t fit those constructions, “knowledge” is created through relationships between student and the world. It is inherently subjective and provisional. Knowledge is valued because it improves the “map” between our mental constructions and actual experiences not because it matches what the “teacher” already knows. (p. 6)

Constructivism emphasizes the learner as an active participant and maker of meaning, and Karge, Phillips, Jessee, and McCabe (2011) agrees that adults learn best by participating in relevant experiences with the utilization of practical information. Nieto (1999) identified the five principles of constructivism as being (a) learning is actively constructed, (b) learning emerges from and builds on experience, (c) learning is influenced by cultural differences, (d) learning is influenced by the context in which it occurs, and (e) learning is socially mediated and develops within a culture and community. With this, a person’s direct actions, reactions, and interactions with objects, people, rules and norms result in the personal construction of knowledge. Bruner (1986) argues that individuals actively construct knowledge by comparing new ideas or concepts with their current knowledge, and the historical roots of this philosophy of learning can be seen as early as Socrates, but also continue through the ideas of Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget.

Through constructivism, culture is learned knowledge. Therefore since the learner is able to interpret multiple realities, the learner is better able to deal with real life

situations. Instructional leaders encounter these real life situations on a regular basis, but decision making is especially important when the decision revolves around ethical dilemmas.

Instructional leaders will be faced with ethical dilemmas that involve human resource management and leadership issues in schools. The resolution that they make regarding an ethical dilemma would be made differently depending on the ethical framework that the instructional leader chooses to use. With this, it is important for administrators to understand the ethical framework they use (justice, care and/or critique), but it is also just as important for administrators to respect the ethical framework of their administrative counterparts. Thus, when it comes to understanding administrative decisions, it is important to understand the rationale for the decision being made.

The ethic of justice includes two different means of decision making, utilitarianism and deontology. Utilitarians acknowledge that the many may suffer minor inconvenience if there is overwhelming benefit to a few. “The goal is always and everywhere the same: maximize pleasure and minimize pain” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 31). Utilitarianism is situational and requires an instructional leader to value rank possible resolutions, whereas deontology is a rule based and is applied to all situations and all people involved in the situation. “Successful administrators know how to bring it all together for the benefit of stakeholders and institution alike,” (p. 70) and two of the many ways to “bring it together” is by examining the dilemma as a case-by-case situation or by following the rule or law. Although examining a situation independent of all other

previous decisions can be beneficial to many, “the law can be an aid to the principal and superintendent as they make ethical decisions” (p. 138) in their daily lives.

These two forms that reside under the ethic of justice significantly differs from two other ethical frameworks, care and critique. These two ethical frameworks “asks that the individuals consider the consequences of their decisions and actions” and asks to “consider multiple voices in the decision-making process” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 18), respectively. The ethic of care would allow for a person to make a decision that would please each individual involved in the decision making process, whereas the ethic of critique would allow for administrators to ask and answer the uncomfortable questions that are needed in order to have a conversation to make the best decision. These conversations typically involve a variety of concerns, as well as, include a variety of different people with differing opinions, views, and knowledge.

Double-Loop Learning and Preferred Professional Practice

Carr (2003) expresses that most schools are social institutions: they are located in a given place and regulated by bureaucratic bodies determined by the people of the community. In order to make the best decision for an educational institution, the community and board members must ensure that they are choosing an effective leader for their educational institutions. These “effective leaders see their authority as a source of energy for engaging others in the task of achieving shared goals and purposes” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 133). These shared goals and purposes should then maximize a student’s social growth and achievement abilities.

Argyris and Schon (1996) identified two characteristics of organizational learning as single-loop learning and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning refers to the

detection and correction of errors within existing goals of an organization; whereas double-loop learning is concerned with why and how to change an organization (Argyris & Schon, 1996). Double-loop learning is a key mechanism for long term success within an organization (Moynihan, 2005) because it explores alternatives and attempts “to replace the organizational habit with the educational truth,” by asking what really matters (Tagg, 2007, p. 40). Therefore, if individuals become victim to Groupthink, they are not autonomous in their decision making and organizations may not be able to use double-loop learning to their benefit;

being decisive is about approaching problems or decisions with a clear head and open mind, a willingness to examine all sides of an issue, and an ability to contemplate the possible unintended consequences of any choice. In this conception, being decisive often means having the courage not to make a decision until a problem has been thoroughly examined and understood. (Ritchie, 2013, p. 21)

Within an organization, there exists various layers behind the decision making process, but in order to create the best organization, individuals must lead at their professional best. Loyola University professor, M. Israel, described the Preferred Professional Practice with three encapsulated ideas that make for an organization to be at its best. This consists of having each and every person within the organization being at their professional best, so that the school’s procedures can run at its best, in turn to create an organization that is best for all stakeholders. Furthermore, this practice asks individuals to be aware of their own values and beliefs so that they are aware of the procedures of the organization. The knowing of one’s self, in addition to continual thinking and questioning of the procedures of an organization, can allow for conversations to take place that will allow for further improvements in an organization.

Summary

Understanding the dynamics behind educational decision making is important for each and every constituent in a district. The sentiments and traditions that a culture and community provide allows for the construction of an organization which then creates a leader that can deliver to the people a common vision. Within an educational institution, Johnson (1996) found that expectations for superintendents' leadership could be categorized among three types of leadership: (a) educational leadership, defined by vision and values rooted in pedagogy, curriculum, and a strategy for educating all children, (b) political leadership, for building coalitions of support and exercising influence, and (c) managerial leadership, to ensure that the bureaucratic functions of the organization were carried out effectively and efficiently. Johnson also believes that successful superintendents employ all three styles at various times; therefore the community needs to elect school board members that will adequately select a superintendent that has a shared vision with the community.

This superintendent can then organize the educational institution(s) based on the values, goals and priorities that have been established to create building level leadership positions that will assist in the delivery of those core values. "When leaders know what is expected and only when that knowledge is broadly shared throughout the organization can there be a reasonable expectation that leadership performance will improve" (Reeves, 2009, p.19). Therefore, in order for building level administrators to flourish within a district, they should be aware of their own authority style, constructed knowledge and biases, and the ethical framework they use when making decisions.

With all of these ideas combined, building level administrators can be at their professional best which will allow for conversations to take place to promote improvements in the organization. Administrative teams continually have conversations regarding curriculum, assessment, discipline and safety within their educational institution. Therefore, leaders should be aware if there exists any favored ways of thinking within the organization, but more importantly, whether they have acknowledged any of the eight symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making.

The general purpose of this study was to understand the concerns of the Groupthink phenomenon within the field of education. Therefore, this study was designed to identify where Groupthink affects educational decision making, as well as, expose the characteristics that influence building level administrators' susceptibility to Groupthink.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The four main purposes of this study were to (1) examine whether building level administrators believed they were hired into an administrative position because their belief system matched the district's belief system, (2) uncover where Groupthink occurs within four areas of educational decision making; which includes curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, (3) identify which Groupthink symptom(s) (invulnerability, morality, rationalization, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and/or mindguards) is/are most prominent within the four areas of educational decision making, and (4) expose specific characteristics that influenced a building level administrator's vulnerability to Groupthink. The study findings provide an instructional leader with the insight necessary of ways to avoid creating a school culture that demands for the conformity of beliefs when there already exists a shared system of beliefs within the organization.

The quantitative process of inquiry was used for obtaining data through a three part survey for this study. This systematic process began with developed research questions that address the four main objectives for the study. Additionally, the design was also influenced by pertinent literature that supports the context of the research questions.

Appropriateness of Design

According to Creswell (2002), the quantitative design focuses on surveys and questionnaires as a means of intellectual scientific inquiry. Creswell (2014) further suggests that “a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 155). This specific study used online surveys as the medium of choice to gather information to investigate whether there is a statically significant relationship between a building level administrator’s beliefs and Groupthink occurrences within any of the four selected areas of educational decision making. Therefore in order to effectively and efficiently collect data using the eight symptoms of Groupthink for this study, a quantitative research design was selected. The means to collect the quantitative data was surverymonkey.com, and email messages were used as the communication tool to guide the prospective participants.

Pole (2007) suggests that “data gathered through quantitative methods has sometimes been described as more objective and accurate because it is collected using standardized methods, can be replicated, and analyzed using statistical procedures” (p 36). Furthermore, Winter (2000) adds that a qualitative research design does not require statistical causation for validity, but is typically chosen for a study when there is an investigation of an unrepresentative phenomenon. The design choice for this specific study supports both Pole’s and Winter’s statements because throughout the course of the data collection process, building level administrators were able to objectively represent their own personal beliefs at every point within the study.

Quantitative studies use an adequate sample size which allows for an analysis to be done so that generalizations can occur (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the 159 prospective research subjects chosen for this study encompassed a variety of diversities making the outcomes of the survey generalizable from the applied repeated measures analysis.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The specific type of analysis, repeated measures, was the most appropriate statistical method for addressing the research questions for this study due to the repetition of subjects for each outcome variable. When a study uses this design of analysis, the null and alternative hypotheses need to be created in order to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent, categorical variable consists of a building level administrator's beliefs on curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety for his or her current district, where the dependent variable consists of the eight symptoms of Groupthink: invulnerability, morality rationalization, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards within the four selected areas of educational decision making. Additionally, these hypotheses focus on the variables that have been derived from the original research questions which include:

- 1) What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?
- 2) Among the administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district's belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?

- 3) Among the administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?
- 4) Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence a building level administrator's vulnerability to Groupthink?

Therefore, the research hypotheses for this study include the following:

- H_01 : Groupthink symptoms are equally distributed between the four areas of educational decision making.
- H_11 : Groupthink symptoms are not equally distributed between the four areas of educational decision making.
- H_02 : Groupthink symptoms are equally distributed among building level administrators.
- H_12 : Groupthink symptoms are not equally distributed among building level administrators participants.

Population and Sampling

The participants of this study comprised of building level administrators, including building principals, assistant principals, deans, and other administrative positions of 25 public high schools in a Midwest suburban county. Each participant's decision to participate was voluntary with no monetary incentive given for participation. Confidentiality was respected due to the fact that the survey tool allowed for the tracking of participants without exposing Internet Protocol (IP) addresses as the researcher entered the information into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

This Midwest suburban county was chosen for the study because of the diversity that exists within its 67 communities. These communities belong to larger municipalities, and of the 32 townships, 25 public high schools were used to conduct the 2013-2014 Groupthink study. Of these 25 public high schools in this county, there exists a large range of the following: Student Population: 578 - 4,243; Community Population: 21,137 - 128,358; Percentage of Students with Free and Reduced Lunch: 6% - 24%; and Median Household Income: \$51,422 - \$146,537 (Record Information Services, Inc.). The diversity within the communities attributes to the diversity seen within each individual school, which may allow for imperative information regarding generalizability. Generalization from the study will have to be reconsidered if the data does not represent the existence of a large sample of participants.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from each participant in order for ethical research to take place; therefore each participant was able to decide whether they chose to be a contributor to the research. The informed consent described the purpose of the study, provided the approximate length of time needed to complete the survey, explained that participation and answers are confidential, explained that there were no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life, and also thanked those that engaged in participation. Participation in this study was completely voluntary; therefore there was no penalty for choosing not to participate or choosing to withdraw before survey submission. However, because the data was anonymous, once the participant submitted his/her answers, the researcher was not able to exclude or withdraw that response.

Sampling Frame

Building level administrators of 25 public high schools within the Midwest suburban county were invited to participate in the study. It was assumed that all participants in this study answered the questions honestly so that there was not an adverse impact on the outcome. Participation from every district was not required, and of the twenty-five public high schools, the following is a breakdown of the prospective sampling frame: Number of Districts: 13; Number of High School Principals: 26; Number of High School Assistant Principals: 73; Number of High School Deans: 31; Number of Other Members of the Administrative Team: 29. Information for these administrators was obtained through public online sources, specifically through the school district's websites for the 2013-2014 school year.

Confidentiality

Permission was obtained from each participant, and all of the information gathered during the research was examined and entered into SPSS only by the researcher. At no time did a participant place his/her name on a survey; any personal information identifying a specific person was held confidential by the researcher. Confidentiality was maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Participation in the online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet, but survey responses were transmitted via a secure encrypted connection to the survey site.

The survey provider, surveymonkey.com, maintains several levels of electronic and physical security for its servers maintained in the United States. The anonymous results of the survey were maintained at surveymonkey.com until the survey analysis was complete, and any access to the site was password protected at all times. Only the

researcher had direct access to surveymonkey.com, and once the analysis was complete, all data was deleted from the surveymonkey.com server. Participants were asked not to share their surveys with anyone throughout the course of the study, therefore individuality combined with anonymity allowed for a completely confidential data collection process.

Geographic Location

The entire population of the study was located in a Midwest suburban county. The participants included building principals, assistant principals, deans, and other administrative positions of 25 public high schools within the county. This area of the Midwest contains 67 communities which belong to 32 townships, and the diversity that exists within these communities attributes to the diversity seen within each individual school for the study.

Data Collection

All participants were emailed a link to complete the survey. The voluntary participants completed a three part survey containing information about the building level administrator and the type of district he/she leads, information on the building level administrator's perception of having a shared system of belief with his/her district, and information concerning Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making.

The last piece of the survey was a modification of Rollin Glaser's GroupThink Index (GTI). Chen, Tsai, and Shu (2009) have examined how the original GroupThink Index (GTI) been proven valid and reliable through two previous studies conducted by Richardson (1994) and Esser (1995). Chen, Tsai and Shu (2009) also explained in their

study how this GTI meets the requirements of a scientific research, therefore allowing it to be commercially available and used for management training. This GTI was purchased off of HRDQ: Training Tools for Developing Great People Skills which is a developer of learning solutions to improve the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations. Written and verbal permission was given to the researcher to modify the original GTI questionnaire, and a \$2.25 royalty fee was charged per survey.

The original GTI contained 40 questions, but modifications were made to include only 24 of the original forty questions in this study for reasons of redundancy and participant fatigue, as well as, question ambiguity. For example, the statement “our group members engage in vigorous debate in our group meetings” was omitted from the modified version because the statements “our group members have long penetrating discussion before achieving unanimity,” “our group members assume that members who remain silent during group discussion are in agreement with the majority,” and “our group members reach unanimous decisions quickly” identified the same symptom without too much repetition. Also, statements written with ambiguity, “our group members engage in ‘sound bite’ discussions” were omitted, because the chosen statements “our group members avoid stereotyping other individuals and groups,” our group members avoid labeling other people and their ideas,” and “our group members avoid generalizing about the characteristics of others” can better assess the specific Groupthink symptom.

These 24 questions within the survey addressed the participant’s perceptions of how educational decisions are made when a topic and/or issue is presented to the administrative group. The surveys that were distributed to the building level

administrators used a 5-point Likert-type scale in order to collect data for the study. Scores for each of the four areas of educational decision making ranged from 24 to 120, and scores for each Groupthink symptom within a specific area of educational decision making ranged from 3 to 15. These ranges represent Groupthink occurrences, where higher values signify more of a presence of Groupthink.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2003) states that regression is a method of analysis for assessing the strength of the relationship between each set of independent and dependent variables. The independent variable in this study focused on the building level administrator and his/her beliefs in four areas of educational decision making: curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety. The dependent variable was the Groupthink symptom. The survey was made available to the participants for four weeks, and once this time frame was over, SPSS was used to complete the data analysis of all data for the study. Additionally, significant levels of .05 ($\alpha = .05$) were adopted when making the decision of the hypotheses stated earlier. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and ranges were computed for the dependent variable in each area of educational decision making during the repeated measures analysis.

Validity and Reliability

As previously stated, Chen, Tsai, and Shu (2009) have examined how the original GroupThink Index (GTI) within the 40 question survey has been proven valid and reliable through their research, as well as, discuss the verification of validity and reliability of two previous studies conducted by Richardson (1994) and Esser (1995). The most recent study, Chen et al. (2009), used Cronbach's α and the intrinsic validity index

to determine reliability (all Groupthink symptoms greater than 0.6) and validity (all Groupthink symptoms greater than 0.7), respectively. Chen et al. were able to explain in their study how this GTI meets the requirements of a scientific research, therefore allowing it to be commercially available and used for management training.

In addition to the modified survey, the geographic location was specifically chosen for this study in order to encompass a large diverse population. This research study may eventually serve as a framework for schools to create an awareness of Groupthink occurrences within educational institutions. This awareness is important for leaders to understand so that effective student centered decision making that focuses on curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety is maintained. Furthermore, due to the diversity that exists in the sample population for the research study, replication should be able to occur in any other well-populated county. Although this process of replication will have to be reconsidered if the data does not represent the existence of a variety of characteristics from the sample of participants.

Limitations

Since this study had been designed as a quantitative study, using a survey as the means to gather information, the information was collected by the researcher in an unbiased form. Personal opinions the researcher had pertaining to her own experience with Groupthink did not alter the information provided from the participants when it was entered into SPSS for the statistical analysis to take place. Although once the data was explored, the researcher maintained a journal to express any concerns she had from the data findings. This journal was important to the research because it was used to control for any personal biases the researcher had due to her own personal experiences with

Groupthink in her own school district. These concerns were listed, personally reflected by the researcher, and then also discussed with the dissertation director before any recommendations were made. Maintaining the journal aided in the researcher's personal reflection, which Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2009) feel is an integral part of making claims to knowledge.

Additionally, the researcher had developed four research questions that served as a guide to make recommendations. At this point, there is no research linking which of the four areas of educational decision making is most prone to Groupthink, nor is there research to state which of the eight symptoms is most prominent within a specific area of educational decision making. Therefore since there is no evidence to support these notions, there were no assumptions made prior to the investigation.

Also, although the sample area is diverse and does not pose a threat to selection bias, restructuring of original participants was examined and changed prior to the release of the surveys. Originally, only building principals and assistant principals were going to be prospective participants for the study, although upon further investigation of administrative teams for the Midwestern suburban county public high schools, many of the high schools contained other types of job descriptions for the administrative team in some buildings. Therefore with this new knowledge, the researcher chose to expand the study to include all building level administrators that the district recognized.

Lastly, although this study was given to 159 prospective participants in a diverse area, one has to consider the amount of potential responses that will be collected within the data. Chapters IV and V will expound on the collection of data and further discuss any potential concerns with the outcome of the participants.

Summary

Due to this study, the field of education has a better understanding of Groupthink occurrences within educational organizations. This study used a survey to address building level administrators perceptions on shared system of belief, it uncovered which area of educational decision making is the most vulnerable to Groupthink, it determined which of the eight Groupthink symptoms was the most prominent in the educational decision making, and it identified the characteristics that influence vulnerability to Groupthink. Chapter IV will detail all of the research findings for the study and Chapter V will further discuss the conclusions, recommendations, and implications.

CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine how Groupthink affects educational decision making for building level administrators. Building level administrators that believe they were hired into an administrative position because their belief system matches the district's belief system were examined closely during this study. This research exposed the characteristics that influenced building level administrators' vulnerability to Groupthink. The study used an online survey as the medium to gather information to investigate the occurrences of the eight Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making. The four areas of educational decision making that were examined in the study included curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety. The eight Groupthink symptoms that were examined in the study included invulnerability, morality, rationalization, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards.

The participants were emailed a link which directed them to a three part survey. This three part survey contained information about the building level administrator and the type of district he/she leads (Part I), information on the building level administrator's perception of having a shared system of belief with his/her district (Part II), and information concerning Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making (Part III). This survey contained very few open-ended questions, which were

limited to number of year experience and administrative titles; “providing respondents with a constrained number of answer options increases the likelihood that there will be enough people giving any particular answer to be analytically interesting” (Fowler, 2002, p. 91). Therefore, this survey contained all of the questions necessary to effectively answer the four research questions regarding Groupthink in education.

Research Questions

This study added to the literature on Groupthink by focusing on decision making in educational institutions through the examination of the following research questions:

- 1) What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?
- 2) Among the administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district’s belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?
- 3) Among the administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?
- 4) Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence building level administrators’ vulnerability to Groupthink?

Quantitative Research

To gain information on the Groupthink phenomenon in educational settings so that the findings could be generalizable to a larger population, the researcher chose a suburban county in the Midwest region of the United States which contains 67

communities that belong to 32 townships. Within this targeted suburban area, the researcher identified the 25 public high schools for the county and used the individual school's website to identify the 159 people that fell under the administrative category for the school in which they lead. Each school was unique in the way it identified building level administration, and although building principals and assistant principals were always identified as a building level administrators, some schools varied with recognizing other building level positions such as deans, athletics directors, activity directors, technology directors, and counseling directors. Therefore, the researcher decided to include these positions within the sample space due to the fact that since the school recognized a person as a part of the administrative team, then it was assumed that he/she played a role in the decision making process for the school. "The potential to take each member's unique information and combine it during the decision-making process is one of the greatest strengths of a group" (Baumann & Bonner, 2013, p. 557).

Respondents

One week after the researcher sent an introductory and informational email to the prospective participants, the researcher sent an email with the link to the survey. This survey was open to the prospective participants for four full weeks, with a reminder email one week prior to the closing of the survey. Of the 159 prospective participants, 24 anonymous responses were received; representing a return rate of 15.1%. However, of the 24 surveys that were received, only 22 of the respondents were included in the study; two participants completed the first two portions of the survey, but failed to complete any of the questions in the third part of the survey that contained the questions regarding

Groupthink. Therefore, with the negation of these two surveys for the study, it gave an overall complete response rate of 13.8%.

Although this response rate is low, there are two things that need to be considered. First, the respondents for this study did encompass proportional characteristics from the original targeted sample population. This means that there was an adequate representation of the targeted population, only in a smaller size. Secondly, survey researchers including Visser, Krosnick, Marwette, and Curtin (1996), Curtin, Presser and Singer (2000), Holbrook, Krosnick and Pfent (2005), Keeter, Kennedy, Dimock, Best, and Craighill (2006), and Choung et al. (2013) found that a higher response rate does not justify survey accuracy.

Descriptive Statistics

The following table, Table 1, provides some of the descriptive statistics for each of the participants included with the study; this information was collected through Part I (General Information) of the survey. A total of 22 participants volunteered to take the complete survey, and of these participants seven were female (31.8%) and 15 were male (68.2%). Ages of the respondents in the sample consisted of ranges from 31-40 (n = 10), 41-50 (n = 9), and 51-60 (n = 3), while race varied from black (n = 3) to white (n = 19). These participants have titles of principals (n = 2), assistant principals (n = 15), deans (n = 4), and director of counselors (n = 1) with highest earned degrees of doctorate (n = 2) and masters (n = 20).

These participants lead for different types of districts including multiple high schools within the district (n = 14), one high school within the district (n = 2), and a unit district (n = 6); of which only one participant lived in the district in which he/she serves.

The majority of the participants had student populations of over 1,502 students in their schools (90.9%) and the other participants had between 625 and 1,501 students within their schools.

Educational, non-administrative, years of experience ranged for each participant from 4 to 23 years, which includes one participant each reported having 4 years, 9 years, 11 years, 14 years, 17 years, 19 years, 20 years, and 23 years non-administrative experience, two participants each reported having 5 years, 6 years, 10 years, and 16 years of non-administrative experience, and three participants each reported having 7 years and 8 years of non-administrative experience. Additionally, these same participants reported having years of educational administrative experiences ranging from 1 to 17 years of experience; these include one participant each reported having 2 years, 4 years, 8 years, 14 years, 16 years and 17 years of administrative experience, while two participants each reported having 11 years and 13 years of administrative experience, while three participants each reported having 1 year, 3 years, 7 years, and 10 years of administrative experience.

Table 1 continues to identify that of these 22 participants, seven participants (31.8%) held a previous position within the district, while the other 15 participants (68.2%) did not hold a previous position within their current district. Additionally, some participants felt as if they were hired to be a change agent for all four areas of decision making, curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety (n = 3), only curriculum (n = 1), for only assessment (n = 1), for both curriculum and assessment (n = 6), for only discipline (n = 1), for only safety (n = 1), for both discipline and safety (n = 3), and some participants felt as if they were not hired to be a change agent (n = 6).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Part I: General Information

	Frequency	Overall Percentage
Gender		
female	7	31.8
male	15	68.2
Total	22	100.0
Age		
21-30	0	0.0
31-40	10	45.5
41-50	9	40.9
51-60	3	13.6
61+	0	0.0
Total	22	100.0
Race		
Black	3	13.6
White	19	86.4
Hispanic	0	0.0
Total	22	100.0
Highest Earned Degree		
doctoral	2	9.1
master's	20	90.9
bachelor's	0	0.0
Total	22	100.0
Resident of District		
no	21	95.5
yes	1	4.5
total	22	100.00
District Type		
multiple high schools	14	63.6
one high school	2	9.1
unit district	6	27.3
Total	22	100.0

Student Population

<625	0	0.0
625-1501	2	9.1
>1502	20	90.9
Total	22	100.0

Non-Administrative Experience

4.00	1	4.5
5.00	2	9.1
6.00	2	9.1
7.00	3	13.6
8.00	3	13.6
9.00	1	4.5
10.00	2	9.1
11.00	1	4.5
14.00	1	4.5
16.00	2	9.1
17.00	1	4.5
19.00	1	4.5
20.00	1	4.5
23.00	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

Administrative Experience

1.00	3	13.6
2.00	1	4.5
3.00	3	13.6
4.00	1	4.5
7.00	3	13.6
8.00	1	4.5
10.00	3	13.6
11.00	2	9.1
13.00	2	9.1
14.00	1	4.5
16.00	1	4.5
17.00	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

Current Title		
assistant principal	15	68.2
Dean	4	18.2
director of counselors	1	4.5
Principal	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0
Held a previous position in district		
No	7	31.8
Yes	15	68.2
Total	22	100.0
Believed they were hired as a change agent		
No	6	27.3
yes for all four areas	3	13.6
yes for curriculum only	1	4.5
yes for assessment only	1	4.5
yes for curriculum and assessment	6	27.3
yes for discipline only	1	4.5
yes for safety only	1	4.5
yes for discipline and safety	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

Research Question 1

What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?

Based on the findings in Table 2, 50% of the respondents felt that when they applied for their current administrative position, their belief system absolutely matched that of their district's belief system, while the other 50% of the respondents felt that their belief system mostly matched that of their district's belief system. With the information the researcher gained from this one question, it allowed for the continued use of all the

participants for the remainder of the analysis because none of the participants felt their belief system matched the district's belief system some, not very much, or not at all.

Table 2

Personal Mission Matched District Mission

Mission Match	Frequency	Overall Percentage
absolutely	11	50.0
mostly	11	50.0
some	0	0.0
not very much	0	0.0
not at all	0	0.0
total	22	100.0

Janis (1982) defined Groupthink as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9). More so, the Groupthink phenomenon focuses on faulty ways groups come to decisions; therefore since the administrators felt a strong sense of matching beliefs with their district, Groupthink needs to be considered. The significance of this question is the basis behind gaining the insights necessary of ways to avoid creating a school culture that demands for the conformity of beliefs when there already exists a shared system of belief within the organization.

Research Question 2

Among the building level administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district's belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?

In order to answer this question, the researcher chose to use a repeated measures one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) because of the repeated use of participants within the four areas of curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety. The following hypotheses were used to understand the effects of the eight Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making:

H_0 1: Groupthink symptoms are equally distributed between the four areas of educational decision making.

H_1 1: Groupthink symptoms are not equally distributed between the four areas of educational decision making.

Table 3 shows the initial diagnostic statistics, which was determined by the total sums of all Groupthink symptoms in each of the four areas of decision making for each participant. Table 3 also provides the basic descriptive statistics for the four areas of the independent variable, which can range in total scores from 24 to 120; from this table we can see that, on average, Groupthink occurred the least within discipline ($M=61.7$, $SD=11.7$) but the most within curriculum ($M=62.2$, $SD=12.7$).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Four Areas of Decision Making

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
GT-Curriculum	62.2	12.7	22
GT- Assessment	61.8	12.1	22
GT- Discipline	61.7	11.7	22
GT-Safety	61.6	12.0	22

Table 4 shows Mauchly's test for these data, which indicates that the assumption of sphericity has been violated, $\chi^2(5) = 78.694$, $p < 0.001$. Table 5 shows for an adjustment made for the sphericity violation using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction. Using these corrections, F is not significant because the p value assigned is .608; this is more than the conventional criterion of .05 Type I error rate. These results suggest that of four areas in educational decision making, curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, no area was significantly more susceptible to Groupthink than the others.

Table 4

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity^a

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx.			Epsilon ^b		
		Chi- Square	df	Sig.	Greenhouse- Geisser	Huynh- Feldt	Lower- bound
Area	.018	78.694	5	<.001	.374	.380	.333

Tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

a. Design: Intercept Within Subjects Design: area

b. May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table.

One thing to consider here is the low power that is seen in Table 5. The power of a statistical analysis is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis correctly; therefore having a low power increases the probability of Type II error. The research here indicates that the power is low at 8.5%, which indicates that there is a 91.5% chance of failing to detect an effect that is actually there. This low power is consistent with the non-significant results that none of the areas was more susceptible to Groupthink.

Table 5

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^a
Area								
Greenhouse-Geisser	5.034	1.122	4.486	.311	.608	.015	.349	.085
Error(area)								
Greenhouse-Geisser	339.716	23.563	14.417					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Research Question 3

Among the building level administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?

Although there was no area of decision making that was more susceptible to Groupthink, in order to answer this question, the researcher again chose to use a repeated measures one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) because of the repeated use of participants within the eight symptoms of Groupthink, including invulnerability, morality, rationalization, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity, and mindguards. The following hypotheses were used to understand the effects of the eight Groupthink symptoms within the participants:

H_02 : Groupthink symptoms are equally distributed among building level

administrators.

H_{12} : Groupthink symptoms are not equally distributed among building level administrators.

Table 6 shows the initial diagnostic statistics, which includes the total sums of each of the eight Groupthink symptoms for each participant. Table 6 also provides basic descriptive statistics for the eight levels of the independent variable, which can range in total scores from 12 to 60; from this table we can see that, on average, Groupthink occurred the least within stereotyping ($M=26.1, SD=7.4$), but the most within mind-guarding ($M=38.8, SD=12.7$).

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for the Eight Groupthink Symptoms

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
GT-Invulnerability	28.2	9.4	22
GT- Morality	29.0	5.4	22
GT-Rationalizing	29.2	8.9	22
GT-Stereotyping	26.1	7.4	22
GT-Conformity	27.8	8.26	22
GT-Self-censoring	32.2	11.6	22
GT-Unanimity	36.0	7.4	22
GT-Mindguarding	38.8	12.7	22

Table 7 shows Mauchly's test for these data, which indicates that the assumption of sphericity has not been violated, $\chi^2(27) = 33.835, p = 0.180$. Therefore based on the findings in Table 8, $F(7, 147) = 7.770, p < 0.001$, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis in which Groupthink symptoms are not equally distributed among participants.

Table 7

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity^a

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi- Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon ^b		
					Greenhouse- Geisser	Huynh- Feldt	Lower- bound
Symptom	.160	33.835	27	.180	.655	.860	.143

Tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

a. Design: Intercept Within Subjects Design: symptom

b. May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table.

Table 8

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source		Type III		Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial		
		Sum of Squares	df				Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^a
symptom	Sphericity Assumed	2985.585	7	426.512	7.770	<.001	.270	54.389	1.000
Error(symptom)	Sphericity Assumed	8069.290	147	54.893					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

The results presented in Table 8 identified that there was an overall significant difference in means, but did not determine where the differences occurred. The next table, Table 9, presents the results of the Bonferroni post hoc test, which has allowed the researcher to identify where the means differ between the eight Groupthink symptoms. This post hoc test identified that there were no mean differences (a) between the symptoms of invulnerability, morality, rationalizing, stereotyping, conformity, and self-censoring, (b) between the symptoms of self-censoring and unanimity, and (c) between the symptoms of unanimity and mindguarding among the participants. Although, the Bonferroni post hoc test did reveal that unanimity significantly differed from morality (p

= .020), stereotyping ($p = .017$), and conformity ($p = .041$), while mindguarding significantly differed from invulnerability ($p = .014$), morality ($p = .018$), stereotyping ($p = .002$), conformity ($p = .011$), and self-censoring ($p = .040$).

Table 9

Pairwise Comparisons of Symptoms

Symptom (I)	Symptom (J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Invulnerability	Morality	-.818	2.069	1.000	-8.214	6.578
	Rationalizing	-.955	2.244	1.000	-8.978	7.069
	Stereotyping	2.136	2.012	1.000	-5.057	9.330
	Conformity	.409	1.986	1.000	-6.689	7.507
	Self-censoring	-4.000	2.476	1.000	-12.851	4.851
	Unanimity	-7.682	2.367	.108	-16.145	.781
	Mindguarding	-10.591*	2.586	.014	-19.836	-1.346
Morality	Rationalizing	-.136	1.879	1.000	-6.853	6.580
	Stereotyping	2.955	1.498	1.000	-2.402	8.311
	Conformity	1.227	1.690	1.000	-4.815	7.270
	Self-censoring	-3.182	1.947	1.000	-10.142	3.779
	Unanimity	-6.864*	1.737	.020	-13.075	-.652
	Mindguarding	-9.773*	2.447	.018	-18.520	-1.025
Rationalizing	Stereotyping	3.091	2.385	1.000	-5.435	11.617
	Conformity	1.364	1.676	1.000	-4.627	7.354
	Self-censoring	-3.045	2.571	1.000	-12.236	6.145
	Unanimity	-6.727	2.127	.131	-14.332	.877

	Mindguarding	-9.636	3.192	.183	-21.048	1.775
Stereotyping	Conformity	-1.727	1.990	1.000	-8.843	5.389
	Self-censoring	-6.136	2.376	.486	-14.632	2.359
	Unanimity	-9.818*	2.434	.017	-18.520	-1.116
	Mindguarding	-12.727*	2.551	.002	-21.847	-3.607
Conformity	Self-censoring	-4.409	2.211	1.000	-12.315	3.497
	Unanimity	-8.091*	2.210	.041	-15.991	-.191
	Mindguarding	-11.000*	2.610	.011	-20.329	-1.671
Self-censoring	Unanimity	-3.682	2.170	1.000	-11.438	4.075
	Mindguarding	-6.591*	1.797	.040	-13.014	-.168
Unanimity	Mindguarding	-2.909	2.490	1.000	-11.810	5.992

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Furthermore, using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to look at overall effects within the four areas of decision making between the eight symptoms of Groupthink, Table 10 identifies the following statistics for the four areas of decision making Wilk's Lambda = .759, $F(3, 19)=2.006$, $p = .147$, the eight symptoms of Groupthink Wilk's Lambda = .352, $F(7, 15)= 3.937$, $p = .012$, and the four areas interacting with the eight symptoms Wilk's Lambda = .455, $F(12,10)= 1.000$, $p =.507$. This information confirms that there are no significant differences in the four areas of decision making and the four areas of decision making interacting with the eight symptoms of Groupthink; although it did confirm that there are significant differences between the eight Groupthink symptoms.

Table 10

Multivariate Tests^a

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^c
area	Wilks' Lambda	.759	2.006 ^b	3.000	19.000	.147	.241	6.018	.434
symptom	Wilks' Lambda	.352	3.937 ^b	7.000	15.000	.012	.648	27.557	.890
area *	Wilks' Lambda	.455	1.000 ^b	12.000	10.000	.507	.545	12.000	.278

a. Design: Intercept Within Subjects Design: area + symptom + area * symptom

b. Exact statistic

c. Computed using alpha = .05

Research Question 4

Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence a building level administrator's vulnerability to Groupthink?

Based on the findings from the last research question, which focused on the eight Groupthink symptoms, unanimity and mindguarding were the two symptoms that significantly differed from the other six symptoms of Groupthink. The researcher wanted to uncover the characteristics that influenced a building level administrator's vulnerability to Groupthink, therefore, the researcher was able to run a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to better determine where these two symptoms occurred, as well as, where other symptoms yielded significant results.

Due to the fact that all participants either felt as if their belief system absolutely (50%) and mostly (50%) matched that of their district's belief system, the researcher

needed to consider the participants perceived hiring intentions. For instance, the researcher needed to consider whether the participants felt as if they were hired to be a change agent within any or all of the four areas of decision making. If administrators identified themselves as a change agent within any of the four areas of educational decision making, then they felt as if they were hired to make changes to that particular area of decision making for their school. Building level administrators felt as if they were hired to be a change agent for all four areas of educational decision making (n= 3), for curriculum and assessment (n=6), for safety and discipline (n=3), for curriculum (n=1), for assessment (n=1), for discipline (n=1), for safety (n=1), and as if they were not hired to be a change agent (n=6).

In order to analyze this information the researcher chose to use a MANOVA, but also introduced this change agent factor to be considered within the subjects. Mauchly's test for these data indicated that sphericity has not been violated, $\chi^2(27) = 18.936$, $p = .885$, and Table 11, identifies these within subjects effects, which concludes that F is significant within the four areas of decision making, the eight Groupthink symptoms and change agent $F(147, 294) = 2.241$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore due to there being significant differences, the researcher chose to uncover where Groupthink occurs within these three factors.

Table 11

Test of Within-Subject Effects

Source		Type III		Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial		Observed Power ^a
		Sum of Squares	df				Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	
Area	Sphericity Assumed	1.982	3	.661	.805	.498	.054	2.415	.209
area * changagent	Sphericity Assumed	7.991	21	.381	.464	.970	.188	9.735	.268
Error(area)	Sphericity Assumed	34.474	42	.821					
Symptom	Sphericity Assumed	374.740	7	53.534	4.408	<.001	.239	30.859	.989
symptom * changagent	Sphericity Assumed	827.244	49	16.883	1.390	.084	.410	68.122	.983
Error(symptom)	Sphericity Assumed	1190.078	98	12.144					
area * symptom	Sphericity Assumed	9.494	21	.452	2.130	.003	.132	44.730	.993
area * symptom * changagent	Sphericity Assumed	69.919	147	.476	2.241	<.001	.528	329.418	1.000
Error(area*symptom)	Sphericity Assumed	62.401	294	.212					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Table 12

Significant Area, Groupthink, Change Agent Parameter Estimates

Area of Decision Making	Symptom	Change Agent	Sig
Curriculum	Unanimity	All Areas	.009
	Unanimity	Curriculum/Assessment	.019
	Mindguarding	All Areas	.028
Assessment	Unanimity	All Areas	.013
	Unanimity	Curriculum/Assessment	.021
	Mindguarding	All Areas	.029
	Mindguarding	Discipline	.043
Discipline	Morality	All Areas	.024
	Morality	Curriculum	.022
	Rationalizing	Discipline	.016
	Unanimity	All Areas	.006
	Unanimity	Curriculum/Assessment	.013
	Mindguarding	All Areas	.029
	Mindguarding	Discipline	.024
Safety	Morality	All Areas	.024
	Rationalizing	Discipline	.016
	Unanimity	All Areas	.011
	Unanimity	Curriculum/Assessment	.021
	Mindguarding	All Areas	.029
	Mindguarding	Discipline	.024

When examining the parameter estimates of this data, the researcher found that within the area of curriculum, unanimity and all areas change agent ($p=.009$), unanimity and curricular/assessment change agent ($p=.019$), and mindguarding and all areas change agent ($p=.028$) were significant. Within the area of assessment, unanimity and all areas change agent ($p=.013$), unanimity and curricular/assessment change agent ($p=.021$),

mindguarding and all areas change agent ($p=.029$), and mindguarding and discipline ($p=.043$) were significant. Within the area of discipline, morality and curricular/assessment change agent ($p=.024$), morality and curricular change agent ($p=.022$), rationalizing and discipline change agent ($p=.016$), unanimity and all areas change agent ($p=.006$), unanimity and curricular/assessment change agent ($p=.013$), mindguarding and all areas change agent ($p=.029$), mindguarding and discipline change agent ($p=.024$) were significant. Additionally within the area of safety, morality and all areas change agent ($p=.024$), rationalizing and discipline change agent ($p=.016$), unanimity and all areas change agent ($p=.011$), unanimity and curricular/assessment change agent ($p=.021$), mindguarding and all areas change agent ($p=.029$), and mindguarding and discipline change agent ($p=.024$) were significant.

Running further individual analyses, the researcher was able to uncover that while incorporating the four areas of educational decision making with the eight symptoms of Groupthink, the categories of gender, age, race, degree, non-administrative experience, administrative experience, title, district residence, district type, student population, previous position held within district, the inclusion of discipline decision making, and the inclusion of safety decision making did not yield significant results. All other categories of mission driving decision making, mutual respect of colleagues, conversations between administrator and superintendent, the inclusion of curricular decision making, and the inclusion of assessment decision making resulted in some significant ($\alpha<.05$) results that need to be further explained. Although, due to multiple analyses being ran, the Type I error rate increases. Therefore, the researcher chose to use a more appropriate and conservative significant ($\alpha<.01$) findings for the analysis.

Within mission drives decision making, significant results were found in curriculum including invulnerability/Almost Always ($p=.005$), stereotyping/Almost Always ($p=.003$), mindguarding/Almost Always ($p<.001$), in assessment including invulnerability/Almost Always ($p=.003$), stereotyping/Almost Always ($p=.003$), mindguarding/Almost Always ($p<.001$), in discipline including invulnerability/Almost Always ($p=.008$), stereotyping/Almost Always ($p=.003$), and mindguarding/Almost Always ($p=.001$), and in safety including stereotyping/Almost Always ($p=.003$) and mindguarding/Almost Always ($p=.001$).

Additionally, mutual respect between the administrator participants and their colleagues found significant effects when the four areas of decision making and the eight Groupthink symptoms were investigated. Within curriculum, morality/Absolutely ($p=.029$) and morality/Mostly ($p=.005$) were significant, within assessment morality/Absolutely ($p=.003$) and morality/Mostly ($p=.006$) were significant, within discipline morality/Absolutely ($p=.007$), and within safety morality/Absolutely ($p=.003$) was significant.

Table 13

Parameter Estimates of Area and Symptom

Parameter and Area		Symptom		Sig.	Observed Power
Mission Drives					
Decision Making					
Curriculum		Invulnerability	AA	.005	.858
		Stereotyping	AA	.003	.894
		Stereotyping	Frequently	.049	.515
		Mindguarding	AA	<.001	.981
		Mindguarding	Frequently	.015	.715
		Assessment	Invulnerability	AA	.003
	Mindguarding	AA	<.001	.981	

		Mindguarding	Frequently	.014	.804
	Discipline	Invulnerability	AA	.008	.823
		Stereotyping	AA	.003	.891
		Mindguarding	AA	.001	.972
	Safety	Mindguarding	Frequently	.011	.763
		Invulnerability	AA	.016	.708
		Stereotyping	AA	.003	.899
		Conformity	AA	.038	.562
		Self-censoring	AA	.045	.531
		Mindguarding	AA	.001	.972
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Mutual Respect	Curriculum	Morality	Absolutely	.003	.897
		Morality	Mostly	.005	.846
		Rationalizing	Absolutely	.038	.561
		Stereotyping	Absolutely	.022	.656
		Self-censoring	Absolutely	.011	.764
		Self-censoring	Mostly	.035	.580
		Mindguarding	Absolutely	.012	.755
	Assessment	Morality	Absolutely	.003	.903
		Morality	Mostly	.006	.836
		Self-censoring	Absolutely	.019	.682
		Mindguarding	Absolutely	.011	.757
	Discipline	Morality	Absolutely	.007	.815
		Morality	Mostly	.021	.666
		Self-censoring	Absolutely	.035	.576
		Mindguarding	Absolutely	.024	.644
	Safety	Morality	Absolutely	.003	.895
		Morality	Mostly	.010	.769
		Self-censoring	Absolutely	.031	.599
		Mindguarding	Absolutely	.024	.644
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Conversations	Curriculum	Conformity	Occasionally	.011	.765
		Unanimity	AA	.025	.638
		Unanimity	Frequently	.031	.599
		Unanimity	Sometimes	.026	.630
		Mindguarding	AA	.002	.920
		Mindguarding	Frequently	.024	.649
	Assessment	Conformity	Occasionally	.005	.854
		Self-censoring	AA	.045	.531
		Unanimity	AA	.032	.598
		Unanimity	Frequently	.032	.598
		Unanimity	Sometimes	.025	.640
		Mindguarding	AA	.002	.916
		Mindguarding	Frequently	.023	.651
	Discipline	Morality	AA	.030	.609
		Morality	Sometimes	.042	.547
		Conformity	Occasionally	.004	.881
		Unanimity	AA	.032	.598
		Unanimity	Frequently	.032	.598
		Unanimity	Sometimes	.025	.640
		Mindguarding	AA	.004	.873
		Mindguarding	Frequently	.034	.587
	Safety	Conformity	Occasionally	.003	.893

	Unanimity	Frequently	.036	.576
	Unanimity	Sometimes	.035	.581
	Mindguarding	AA	.004	.873
	Mindguarding	Frequently	.034	.587
<hr/>				
Included with Curriculum Decisions				
Curriculum	Unanimity	AA	.003	.905
	Unanimity	Frequently	.027	.626
	Mindguarding	Frequently	.047	.525
Assessment	Unanimity	AA	.003	.900
	Unanimity	Frequently	.032	.594
	Unanimity	Occasionally	.048	.522
Discipline	Mindguarding	Sometimes	.037	.571
	Unanimity	AA	.004	.880
	Unanimity	Frequently	.038	.567
Safety	Mindguarding	Sometimes	.036	.577
	Unanimity	AA	.007	.821
	Mindguarding	Sometimes	.036	.577
<hr/>				
Included with Assessment Decisions				
Curriculum	Mindguarding	Occasionally	.022	.664
Assessment	Mindguarding	Occasionally	.012	.759
Discipline	Rationalizing	AA	.029	.614
	Rationalizing	Frequently	.014	.732
	Rationalizing	Occasionally	.047	.522
	Self-censoring	Occasionally	.045	.532
	Mindguarding	Occasionally	.009	.793
Safety	Rationalizing	AA	.029	.614
	Rationalizing	Frequently	.014	.732
	Rationalizing	Occasionally	.047	.522
	Mindguarding	Occasionally	.009	.793

a. AA represents Almost Always

Also, when analyzing conversations between the administrator participants and the superintendent found significant effects when the four areas of decision making and the eight Groupthink symptoms were investigated. Within curriculum, mindguarding/Almost Always ($p=.002$), within assessment conformity/Occasionally ($p=.005$) and mindguarding/Almost Always ($p=.002$), within discipline conformity/Occasionally ($p=.004$) and mindguarding/Almost Always ($p=.004$), and within safety conformity/

Occasionally ($p=.003$) and mindguarding/Almost Always ($p=.004$) were found to be significant.

Lastly, the inclusion of curricular decisions and assessment decisions found significant results when the four areas of decision making and the eight Groupthink symptoms were investigated. Within curricular decisions, curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety had significant results with unanimity/Almost Always ($p=.003$, $p=.003$, $p=.004$, $p=.007$), respectively. Assessment decision making yielded significant results within discipline for mindguarding/Occasionally ($p=.009$) and within safety for mindguarding/Occasionally ($p=.009$).

The following table, Table 14, represents the data that was found to have statistically significant results ($\alpha<.01$) for the study. This table was created by first identifying the Groupthink symptom, followed by the characteristic, the way the participant answered, and then by the area of educational decision making.

Table 14

Significant Symptoms with Area

Symptom	Characteristic	Answered	Area
Invulnerability	Mission Drives Decision Making	Almost Always	Curriculum Assessment Discipline
Morality	Mutual Respect	Absolutely	Curriculum Assessment Discipline Safety
Morality	Mutual Respect	Mostly	Curriculum Assessment

Stereotyping	Mission Drives Decision Making	Almost Always	Curriculum Discipline Safety
Pressure	Conversations With Superintendent	Occasionally	Assessment Discipline Safety
Unanimity	Change Agent	All Areas	Curriculum Discipline
	Inclusion with Curricular Decisions	Almost Always	Curriculum Assessment Discipline Safety
Mindguarding	Mission Drives Decision Making	Almost Always	Curriculum Assessment Discipline Safety
	Conversations With Superintendent Superintendent	Almost Always	Curriculum Assessment Discipline Safety
	Inclusion with Assessment Decisions	Occasionally	Discipline Safety

Summary

The purpose of this research study was to examine how Groupthink affects educational decision making for building level administrators. Not only did this research identify the most prominent symptoms of Groupthink, but it also exposed the characteristics that expressed an increase of vulnerability to Groupthink. In order to answer the four research questions that apply to this purpose, the researcher chose to quantitatively analyze survey responses that were sent to 25 public high schools in a

suburban region in the Midwest. The methodology included analyzing the data set using both repeated measures ANOVA and repeated measures MANOVA.

This survey contained a three part survey containing information about the building level administrator and the type of district he/she leads, information on the building level administrator's perception of having a shared system of belief with his/her district, and information concerning Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making. The questions within the survey have addressed the participant's perceptions of how educational decisions are made within an administrative team so that instructional leaders have an awareness of how group decisions are made for their educational institution. Additionally, this research used quantitative measures to examine all aspects of observable consequences within the symptoms of Groupthink in an educational setting. The study contained a direct focus on the perceptions building level administrators have on group decision making within four very specific areas of educational decision making.

This research found that when administrators are hired into a leadership position, their personal beliefs vastly matched that of the district they got hired to serve. When analyzing the four areas of decision making using a one-way repeated measures ANOVA, curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, all areas embodied symptoms of Groupthink, but in which no one area greatly exceeded the others. Additionally, when the eight areas of Groupthink were compared using a one-way repeated measures ANOVA, two symptoms tended to have higher contrasting group means; these included unanimity and mindguarding.

Although these questions helped with understanding the foundations of Groupthink within an education institution, it was the use of the repeated measures MANOVA that was able to identify the characteristics which influenced building level administrators' vulnerability to Groupthink. The characteristics including gender, age, race, degree, non-administrative experience, administrative experience, title, district residence, district type, student population, previous position held within district, the inclusion of discipline decision making, and the inclusion of safety decision making did not yield significant results, but all other categories of change agent, mission driving decision making, mutual respect of colleagues, conversations between administrator and superintendent, the inclusion of curricular decision making, and the inclusion of assessment decision making did yield some significant results when the four areas of decision making and eight Groupthink symptoms were explored.

These results will be further discussed in the last chapter, Chapter V. The information provided within the next chapter concludes the remainder of the study, in which discussion of the four research questions, findings, and conclusion of the study will be further detailed. In this last chapter, implications for educational leadership and recommendations for future research will also be considered.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the data collected in chapter four and how it relates to educational organizations. Educational organizations are “socially constructed realities, [and] these constructions often have attributed to them an existence and power of their own that allow them to exercise a measure of control over their creators” (Morgan, 1998, p. 182). Therefore, when leaders are hired into a school administrative position because their values and beliefs align to the school’s vision and mission, it is important to understand whether Groupthink plays a role in decision making for the institution.

This study was designed to identify how Groupthink affects educational decision making for building level administrators that believe they were hired into an administrative position because their belief system matches the district’s belief system, as well as, expose the characteristics that influence building level administrators’ susceptibility to Groupthink. This is an important area within education because it will provide the instructional leader with the insight necessary of ways to avoid creating a school culture that demands for the conformity of beliefs when there already exists a shared system of belief within the organization. Creating an awareness of how group decisions are made by the people that hold leadership positions is important for maintaining effective student centered decision making. Therefore, this chapter will

identify the relevance of the four research questions that guided the study, will consider limitations of the research, will identify recommendations for future research, and will discuss implications for the field of education.

Summary of Rationale and Research Methods

This research study is unique to the field of education because it used quantitative measures to examine aspects of observable consequences within four areas of educational decision making and eight symptoms of Groupthink for an educational setting.

Additionally, this study was able to add to the field of education since there was no previous research linking these four areas of educational decision making to the eight symptoms of Groupthink. The study contained a direct focus on the perceptions building level administrators have on group decision making within four very specific areas of educational decision making including curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety. Therefore, it was the researcher's intent to uncover when and where any of the eight Groupthink occurrences arise so that enough awareness can be created within educational environments to avoid Groupthink during group decision making.

This study used a three part survey to address building level administrators perceptions on shared system of beliefs, it uncovered which area of educational decision making is the most vulnerable to Groupthink, it determined which of the eight Groupthink symptoms is the most prominent in the educational decision making, and it identified the characteristics that influence vulnerability to Groupthink. The data from this three part survey was analyzed using a combination of repeated measures one-way ANOVA and repeated measures MANOVA, as these analyses were best to use due to the nature of having the repeated use of participants within differing categories of

educational decision making and Groupthink symptoms. Moreover, these analyses were the most appropriate statistical method for addressing the research questions for this study due to the repetition of subjects for the outcome variable(s).

Research Questions

This study added to the literature on Groupthink and leadership decision making practices within an educational setting through the examination of the following research questions:

- 1) What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?
- 2) Among the building level administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district's belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?
- 3) Among the building level administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?
- 4) Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence building level administrators' vulnerability to Groupthink?

Conclusions

Research Question 1

What perceptions do current building level administrators have about the shared system of belief within their institution?

Relevance of Research Question 1

Based on the findings discovered in Chapter IV, 50% of the respondents felt that when they applied for their current administrative position, their belief system absolutely matched that of their district's belief system, 50% of the respondents felt that their belief system mostly matched that of their district's belief system and 0% of the respondents felt that their belief system matched the district's belief system some, not very much, or not at all.

Janis (1982) defined Groupthink as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9). More so, the Groupthink phenomenon focuses on faulty ways groups come to decisions; therefore since the administrators felt a strong sense of matching beliefs with their district, Groupthink needs to be considered. The significance of this question is the basis behind gaining the insights necessary of ways to avoid creating a school culture that demands for the conformity of beliefs when there already exists a shared system of beliefs within the organization.

Bolman and Deal (2008) stated that an organization's culture is built over time as members develop beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that seem to work and are transmitted to new recruits. Hoy and Miskel (2010) claim that an organizational culture shares values, norms, philosophies, perspectives, expectations, attitudes, myths, and trends that give it a distinctive identity that holds its units together. Deenmamode (2011) added that “over time, the norms and values are transformed into deeply-rooted ways of behaving or interacting with each other and taken-for-granted assumptions which are the

essence of organizational culture” (p. 306). Additionally, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) state that “leaders must develop a purpose for the organization by setting directions. Successful leaders provide the capacity for building a shared vision and facilitates this process, help promote the acceptance of group goals, and set expectations for high performance within the organization” (p. 31). This direction is the vision and mission for a school and The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2011) affirms that “vision is a force providing meaning and direction to the function of an organization” (p. 2). Therefore, leaders in education must understand their beliefs, as well as, the school in which they lead so that the parallel belief systems provide the meaning and direction for the educational organization.

Research Question 2

Among the administrators that believe they were hired because they share the district’s belief system, within which of the following area(s) (curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety), have they experienced symptoms of Groupthink?

Relevance of Research Question 2

The results examined within Chapter IV suggested that of four areas in educational decision making, curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, no area was significantly more susceptible to Groupthink than the others. Simon (2001) believes that there are two main assumptions about decision making which includes inherent logic and linear logic. Simon feels that these two types of logic can be further described as systematic logics where inherent logic works under the premise of rational decision making, whereas linear logic works under the premise of sequential decision making.

Based on these two assumptions, when decisions are made by educational leaders, certain constraints must be considered and applied during the decision making process.

Crow (2007), Bush (2009), and Fine and McNamara (2011) emphasized the increase of challenges the school leader faces due to the increase of complexity within the school organization, and Bennis (2009) adds that because change is constant within the educational organization leaders “must manage change” (p. 162) and “see change as an opportunity to move an organization forward” (p. 164). As a result of these changes, along comes a change in decision making by leaders.

Gronn (2008) stated that in the past, school decision making was primarily done by a single person, although Silins and Mulford (2002), Hallinger (2003), Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, and Louis (2009), Hulpia, Devos and Van Keer (2011), found that educational institutions that share ideas in the decision making process obtain better results due to the establishment of trust and confidence within the organization. Therefore, with the combination of limitations during decision making and administrative collaboration, effective decision making can be reached for any area of decision making because the “power available to the group multiplies” (Owens, 1998, p. 283) when a collaborative effort is shared.

Research Question 3

Among the administrators that acknowledged symptoms of Groupthink within any of these four areas of educational decision making, which symptom was the most prominent?

Relevance of Research Question 3

The results presented in Chapter IV identified that there was an overall significant difference in means with the symptoms of unanimity and mindguarding. These two symptoms are identified within the Type III symptoms of Groupthink, which focuses on pressure toward uniformity within a group. Unanimity exists when there is the illusion that all group members agree with a certain decision, while mindguarding exists within members of the group who keep information from other group members that may cause them to question the effectiveness of the group's decision.

With decision making, Romme (2004) stated that “many organizations rely on an increasingly diverse workforce and various types of teams and groups, involving individuals from multiple departments and constituencies” (p. 704). This study encompassed a variety of participants with differing leadership positions within the educational setting, and Senge (1990) feels that it is important to consider input from all levels of an organization. Although, even with this diversity of building level administrative positions, unanimity and mindguarding were apparent through the decision making process.

When considering an educational institution during decision making, it is important to reflect on the ideas and/or suggestions made by all members of the administrative team. Morrison (2011) affirms this notion and further states that the communication of ideas and suggestions should be discussed during decision making in order to better an organization, and Mackenzie, Podsakoff and Podsakoff (2011) agrees that this communication can help improve the overall effectiveness and performance of an organization. Minson and Mueller (2012) found that when collaborators are reluctant

to “integrate external input into their decisions [it] may substantially impair their ability to achieve their goals” (p. 223). Consequently, this research found that two Groupthink symptoms of unanimity and mindguarding are present within an educational institution, and these known factors can be detrimental to the success of an organization.

Liang, Farh and Farh (2012) discuss how adults in the workplace weigh the costs and benefits before integrating their ideas and/or suggestions during a group discussion, while Withey and Cooper (1989) suggest that these same adults weigh whether the ideas and/or suggestions will be valuable enough for change to occur within the organization. Therefore when considering educational institutions, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2008) suggests that leaders need to be able to detect and perceive subtle cues of when group members are withholding their ideas and/or suggestions. Doing so will allow for great conversations to occur so that the inclusion of ideas and/or suggestions for improvement can be made to better the organization as a whole.

Research Question 4

Within the most prominent symptom(s) of Groupthink, what characteristics seem to influence building level administrators’ vulnerability to Groupthink?

Relevance of Research Question 4

The results presented in Chapter IV showed that the characteristics including gender, age, race, degree, non-administrative experience, administrative experience, title, district residence, district type, student population, previous position held within district, the inclusion of discipline decision making, and the inclusion of safety decision making did not yield significant results, but all other categories of change agent, mission driving decision making, mutual respect of colleagues, conversations between administrator and

superintendent, the inclusion of curricular decision making, and the inclusion of assessment decision making did yield significant results when the four areas of decision making and eight Groupthink symptoms were explored.

Janis's (1972) original hypothesis of Groupthink follows the results found within these characteristics, which he stated that "the more amiability and esprit de corps among the members of a policy-making in-group, the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by Groupthink" (p. 13). This implies that the more cohesive a group is the more likely Groupthink will occur. Therefore the people that hold the decision making power within an educational institution need to be aware how these characteristics apply to them and their ability to make decisions.

Ultimately, this study found that unanimity and mindguarding were the two symptoms of Groupthink that occurred the most within educational institutions. Unfortunately with the current state of our nation, an awareness needs to be made on faulty ways groups come to decisions. Currently, the nation is experiencing a time of major change. Leaders are experiencing the challenge of raising academic abilities through their curriculum, implementing new mandated assessment measures, all while having to comply with the lack of promised budgets and new legislation. With these factors in mind, the downsizing of programs and positions is a major decision making factor within educational institutions, and educational leaders cannot allow for Groupthink to accompany decision making during these modern complex times.

Limitations of Research

When research is conducted it is subjected to certain limitations. Since this study has been designed as a quantitative study, using a survey as the means to gather

information, the researcher needed to be careful with the types of questions that were contained in the survey. This three part survey contained information about the building level administrator and the type of district he/she leads, information on the building level administrator's perception of having a shared system of belief with his/her district, and information concerning Groupthink symptoms within four areas of educational decision making. The first portion of the survey contained very general information which did not lend itself to any biases. The second portion of the survey needed to be strategically written so that biases did not factor in to the survey. The questions included within this portion of the survey were written and then modified by the researcher and committee so that participants were not subjected to answer any partial questions which may change the outcome of the study. Lastly, the third portion of the survey was a modification of the GroupThink Index which had been previously proven valid and reliable. The modification to this portion of the survey needed to be done in order to reduce the number of questions each participant was to answer; since respondent fatigue was originally a concern due to too much repetition within the original survey.

The data from this three part survey was then collected by the researcher in an unbiased form, because personal opinions the researcher has pertaining to her own experience with Groupthink does not alter the information provided from the participants. Additionally, when the data was collected and directly entered into SPSS for the statistical analysis to take place, the researcher was not required to interpret and/or decipher emergent themes with any qualitative information due to this survey being quantitative in nature. The repetition of participants within each differing category

required the researcher to use repeated measures analyses within SPSS to determine the results of the study.

The geographic location was specifically chosen for this study in order to encompass a large diverse population. This research study may eventually serve as a framework for schools to create an awareness of Groupthink occurrences within educational institutions. Furthermore, due to the diversity that exists in the sample population for the research study, replication should be able to occur in any other well-populated county. One important factor to consider with the replication of this study is that although anonymity of respondents was upheld throughout the course of the study, it is unclear to which school/district the participants are from. Therefore if replication were to occur, one would have to be aware of the fact that the large majority of the respondents within this study came from a school with student populations over 1,502 enrolled students. Additionally, it is unclear if one school/district accounted for a large percentage of the viable responses. If so, there would be an overrepresentation of one school/district, which may skew the data findings.

Although the sample area is diverse and does not pose a threat to selection bias, restructuring of original participants was examined and changed prior to the release of the surveys. Originally, only building principals and assistant principals were going to be prospective participants for the study, although upon further investigation of administrative teams for the public high schools used within the Midwest suburban region, many of the high schools contained other types of job descriptions for the administrative team in some buildings. Therefore with this new knowledge, the researcher chose to expand the study to include all building level administrators that the

district recognizes as administrative positions for the building due to their likeliness to participate in the decision making process.

Of the 159 prospective participants, 24 anonymous responses were received; representing a return rate of 15.1%. However, of the 24 surveys that were received, only 22 of the respondents were included in the study; two participants completed the first two portions of the survey, but failed to complete any of the questions in the third part of the survey that contained the questions regarding Groupthink. Therefore, with the negation of these two surveys for the study, it gives an overall completion response rate of 13.8%. This low response rate does not fully represent the diversity of building level administrative leadership the researcher was originally looking to gain information on within the original sample space so that generalizations can occur. Although, when comparing the demographics of the sample population with the demographics of the anonymous respondents, the analyzed sample was very representative of the original population.

The researcher sent an informational email out to the prospective participants at the end of May in 2014 stating that the survey would be open and able to take during the month of June. With this timeframe being at the end of a school year, as well as, at the end of the fiscal year, the researcher wondered if student graduation, summer, summer school, and/or the possible change in positions deterred prospective participants to volunteer their time with accessing and completing the survey.

Although the researcher was able to attain 22 complete surveys to analyze using SPSS, the researcher chose to maintain a journal to express any concerns she uncovered within the data findings. This journal was an important piece to the research because it

was used to control for any personal biases the researcher had due to her own personal experiences with Groupthink in her own school district. This documentation was kept private, but allowed the researcher to express certain feelings of frustration and/or accomplishments throughout the data collection process which were listed and personally reflected on by the researcher. Additionally, this journal was kept as a way to maintain the confidential results by keeping the data organized and accessible. This aspect of the journal was the central focus for articulating the meaning behind the conceptual framework for the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Four areas of educational decision making and the eight symptoms of Groupthink were the differing categories which encompassed the body of this research study, and although public high schools within this Midwest suburban region were well populated and diverse for the gathering of information, one recommendation for future research would be to broaden the span of participants. Further research with Midwest suburban private schools, primary and/or elementary schools, middle schools, very rural and/or urban schools would further develop the understanding of Groupthink occurrences within the educational setting. Additionally, schools from other regions with differing curriculum requirements, testing obligations, disciplinary issues, and safety concerns would be a great addition to the wealth of knowledge with this research study.

Another way of broadening the span of participants would be to include other constituents within the district to understand whether there is an underlying perception of Groupthink for an educational institution. In order to do this, the surveys would need to be adjusted to ask questions directed towards board members, district level

administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students, as well as, community members and businesses.

Next, another recommendation for future research would be to incorporate more characteristics that influence building level administrators' susceptibility to Groupthink. This research included looking at the characteristics as a primary source, therefore, a compellation of characteristics or even the introduction of other characteristics can be incorporated into the study to further the understanding of Groupthink occurrences within an educational institution.

Lastly, another recommendation for future research would be to incorporate a mixed methods data analysis approach. Due to the lack of awareness with overrepresentation of a certain school/district, one can gain much more insight on Groupthink occurrences in a particular type of school/district. Due to the anonymity of this study's survey responses, further research involving a qualitative design may allow for greater generalizability for public high schools.

Implications

There are several implications that can be made from the data that has been presented from this research. The information provided within the literature of the Groupthink phenomenon needs to be one of the main understandings instructional leaders possess. As Israel, Docekal, and Kasper (2010) found within their study, this study also suggests that learning the signs of any of the eight Groupthink symptoms during group decision making is imperative for the success of an educational institution. This is a necessity for an educational organization so that faulty ways of decision making are not

made for the organization, which in turn, results in unsuccessful outcomes for the constituents.

Since group decision making is becoming such a large part of educational decision making, like Hallgren's (2010) study, this study also suggests that group dynamics need to be considered during the decision making process. Rebore (2011) explains how human resource management ensures that a school district, "has the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time" (p. 93); therefore an instructional institution needs to be aware of who they are hiring for a specific position.

Eisner (1985) stated that "it becomes clear that what we teach in schools is not always determined by a set of decisions that have entertained alternatives; rather, the subjects that are now taught are a part of a tradition, and traditions create expectations, they create predictability, and they sustain stability" (p. 105). Hiring for a position while having the explicit, implicit, and null curricula of the organization in mind should be a consideration during the hiring process so that the dynamic of the group is at its best for the organization. Like Leana's (1985) study, knowing which candidate will embody the appropriate source of authority for a specific leadership position may allow for better conversations to be had during the decision making process. This is essential because as Sergiovanni (1992) stated "we have come to view leadership as behavior rather than action, as something psychological rather than spiritual, as having to do with persons rather than ideas" (p. 3) and "this has all led to overemphasis on doing things right as opposed to doing the right thing" (p. 4).

Doing the right thing depends on the people making the decision for the people the decisions are made for. Janis (1982) defined Groupthink as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9). Therefore, hiring a person that has the same vision for the organization is important, but it is just as important to know that this person will also have the knowledge and confidence to critically critique suggestions during the decision making process. This process may allow for the new leader to apply ideas and/or initiatives to better change the organization.

Having the knowledge and confidence needed to make imperative decisions for an educational organization are important characteristics for a leader to possess. For that reason, leaders need to be sure they are continuously improving their wealth of knowledge within the field of education. Not only is it important for leaders to stay well versed with the state and federal mandates, but leaders also need to be able to listen to the concerns and/or suggestions of the people that help run the organization. Creating a culture and community where individuals assume different responsibilities all while working collaboratively toward a shared vision of improving education for students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997) is vital to the success of an organization. The knowing of one’s self, in addition to continual thinking and questioning of the procedures of an organization, can allow for conversations to take place that will allow for further improvements in an organization.

The continual improvement of an educational organization is done through the right decisions being made by a person or group. When it is a group making decisions for

an organization, it is understood that there is some level of respect and trust between the group members. As a result, Erdem (2003) found that the more respect and trust exists between members of a decision making team, the more susceptible the team is to Groupthink. Keeping the focus on the decision being made for the constituents it will have an impact on, is detrimental for a successful decision being made. Therefore, it is important for instructional leaders to maintain professional relationships and unbiased conversations with their colleagues.

When looking at all of these aspects combined, educational leaders need to really understand if there is a presence of Groupthink, but also breaching strategies to counter act Groupthink within their organization. Although leaders are presented with the challenges of decision making regarding curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety, the knowing of when, where, and how Groupthink occurs is important to the organization; especially during these modern complex times.

Summary

Understanding the dynamics behind educational decision making is important for each and every constituent in a district. This research study exposed the dynamics behind the decision making process for an educational organization within its five chapters. Chapter I presented an introduction for the current study, detailed the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the four research questions, and the methodology used for data analysis. Chapter II explored pertinent literature that recognizes previous Groupthink occurrences in history and empirical research studies, showed the connection between community and culture and how it relates to an educational institution, and discussed how educational institutions are led by people with differing wealths of

knowledge and experiences that may impact decision making for the institution. Chapter III supplied thorough information about the current study including design, hypotheses, sample space, analysis, and validity and reliability measures. Chapter IV presents the results of the current study, while chapter five discusses the four research questions, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of the study.

The field of education now has a better understanding of Groupthink occurrences within educational organizations. The purpose of this research study examined how Groupthink affects educational decision making for building level administrators by identifying the most prominent symptoms of Groupthink and by exposing the characteristics that created an increase of vulnerability to Groupthink. A quantitative analysis, using both repeated measures ANOVA and repeated measures MANOVA, addressed the four research questions. The results of the study found that (1) when administrators are hired into a leadership position, their personal beliefs vastly matched that of the district they got hired to serve, (2) the educational decision making areas of curriculum, assessment, discipline, and safety all areas embodied symptoms of Groupthink, but in which no one area greatly exceeded the others, (3) unanimity and mindguarding were the two symptoms that had significantly higher contrasting group means, and 4) the categories of change agent, mission driving decision making, mutual respect of colleagues, conversations between administrator and superintendent, the inclusion of curricular decision making, and the inclusion of assessment decision making yielded significant results.

Instructional leaders can take the information found within this current research study in order to better make group decisions for their institution without the worry of

Groupthink occurrences. Fuller and Aldag (1998) discussed that the concept of Janis's Groupthink has become synonymous with faulty group decision making, and current educational institutions tend to make group decisions for the organization. Therefore, this study allows for leaders to construct an awareness of how favored ways of thinking can impact their educational institution.

APPENDIX A
INFORMATIONAL EMAIL TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

May, 2014

Dear High School Administrator,

My name is Julie Flitcraft, and I am completing my Ed.D. in Administration and Supervision at Loyola University Chicago. My dissertation is entitled Decision Making of Building Level Administrators and Their Perceptions on Groupthink.

The purpose of my research is to examine how group decisions affect an instructional institution. I am looking to analyze educational decisions made by building level administrators that believe they were hired into an administrative position because their belief system matches the district's belief system, as well as, expose characteristics that influence building level administrators' susceptibility to Groupthink.

Your participation in this research will require approximately thirty minutes of your time. There will be a three-part data collection process. The first part involves completing questions which will contain general information about both you and your district. The second part asks for you to answer questions based on your own personal experiences with the district you currently lead. The last and final part will contain a modified version of Rollin Glaser's GroupThink Index that requests an honest evaluation of your perceptions with your administrative team's decision making processes during the 2013-2014 school year.

Please understand that all information remains strictly confidential, and at no time will you, your school, or your school district be identified by name. The information collected within the three-part survey will be used for drawing conclusions after using repeated measures data analysis.

I know how valuable your time is, especially at the end of a school year, but the high schools in this county have much to offer to this research study. Therefore, I would truly appreciate your consideration with your participation in this research. In return for your participation, I will provide you with a summary of my research findings if you so request.

Please understand that your participation in this research is completely voluntary. There will be no penalty for choosing not to participate. Additionally, if for any reason you feel the need to withdraw yourself from participating in the research study, no penalty will be ensued.

In approximately one week I will email you a link that contains this three-part survey. In the meantime, if you have any questions, you can contact me at (815)464-4577 or jflitcraft@lw210.org. If you have any questions regarding this research study as part of my Ed.D. program at Loyola University, you can contact my dissertation director, Dr. Janis Fine, Graduate Program Director, Administration and Supervision at jfine@luc.edu.

Thank you for your future consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Flitcraft
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX B
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Prior to beginning this survey please read this page very carefully. By clicking the NEXT button below you are giving your consent to participate in the research study. If you do not wish to participate in the survey, then click on EXIT.

Project Title:

Decision Making of Building Level Administrators and Their Perceptions on Groupthink

Researcher(s):

Julie Flitcraft

Faculty Sponsor:

Dr. Janis Fine, Graduate Program Director, Administration and Supervision

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study conducted by Julie Flitcraft for a dissertation project under the supervision of Dr. Janis Fine from the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are currently a building level administrator for a high school residing within a Midwest suburban county.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding to participate in the study. By completing the survey you are agreeing to participate in the research.

Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to examine building level administrators' perceptions of the administrative team's decision making processes.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate, then click the NEXT button. You will be asked to take a three-part survey which should take approximately 30 minutes of your time. The three parts include questions regarding: general information about both you and your district, personal experiences with the district you currently lead, and a modified version of Rollin Glaser's GroupThink Index that requests your honest evaluation of your perceptions of your administrative team's decision making processes during the 2013-2014 school year.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the results will be used to help school leaders understand how group decision making can affect an educational institution.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet. Your answers will be confidential to the limits of technology and at no point will an individual response be available. Throughout this survey your responses will be transmitted via a secure encrypted connection to the survey site. The survey provider maintains several levels of electronic and physical security for its servers maintained in the United States.

The anonymous results of the survey will be maintained at surveymonkey.com until after the survey analysis is complete. A single download of the data will be made for analysis. All access to the surveymonkey.com site and the downloaded copy will be password protected at all times. Only the researcher will have direct access to surveymonkey.com. Once all analysis is complete, all data will be deleted from the surveymonkey.com server.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There will be no penalty for choosing not to participate or choosing to withdraw yourself before survey submission. However, because the data is anonymous, once submitted the researcher will not be able to exclude or withdraw a participant's response.

Research Subject Rights:

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Contact and Questions:

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please feel free to contact Julie Flitcraft at (815)464-4577 or jflitcraft@lw210.org. You may also contact Dr. Janis Fine at jfine@luc.edu.

Statement of Consent:

By clicking the NEXT button below, you indicate that you are 18 years of age or older, have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

APPENDIX C
DECISION MAKING OF BUILDING LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS AND THEIR
PERCEPTIONS ON GROUPTHINK SURVEY

PART I: General Information.

Gender: Male Female
 Age: 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+
 Race: Black White Hispanic

Do you live in the district you are currently serving? Yes No

Type of district you are currently serving:

 Unit District One High School District Multiple High School District

Student population for your current high school: Up to 624 625 – 1501 1502 +

Number of years you have held a non-administrative position in education: _____

Number of years you have held an administrative position in education (including this year): _____

What is your current administrative title? _____

When applying for your current position, were you already holding another position within the district? Yes No

 If yes, please state your previous position _____

Do you believe you were hired to be a change agent? Yes No

 If yes, please indicate by circling the area(s) in which you believe you were hired to change: Curriculum Assessment Discipline Safety

Highest level of education you have received: Bachelor's Master's Doctoral

PART II: Mission Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Your response to the following questions should be based on your own personal experiences. Please circle the answer of your choice, where:

AA- Almost Always F- Frequently S- Sometimes O- Occasionally AN- Almost Never

1. When applying for your current position, the mission of the district matched your beliefs.

 AA F S O AN
2. The mission of the district drives the decision making processes.

 AA F S O AN
3. The relationship between yourself and your administrative colleges are that of mutual respect.

 AA F S O AN
4. Conversations between yourself and the superintendent focus on educational decision making.

 AA F S O AN
5. You are included with curricular decision making for the district.

 AA F S O AN
6. You are included with assessment decision making for the district.

 AA F S O AN
7. You are included with safety decision making for the district.

 AA F S O AN
8. You are included with discipline decision making for the district.

 AA F S O AN

Part III: Groupthink Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each statement and honestly evaluate your perceptions of group decision-making during the 2013-2014 school year. Consider times throughout this current school year when you and your administrative team have had to make educational decisions regarding student curricula, student assessments, safety matters, and student disciplinary issues. Circle the number that best indicates your perceptions of practices within your current district, where:

AA- Almost Always

F- Frequently

S- Sometimes

O- Occasionally

AN- Almost Never

1. Our group members assume that members who remain silent during the group discussion are in agreement with the majority.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

2. Our group members avoid stereotyping other individuals and groups.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

3. Our group members objectively weigh the moral and ethical consequences of the group's decision.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN

Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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4. Our group members keep silent about their misgivings on projects.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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5. Our group members are not prevented from challenging the leader or the thinking of the majority.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
--------	----	---	---	---	----

Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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6. Our group members reach unanimous decisions quickly.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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7. Our group members have subtle but sure ways of bringing doubters in line with the majority.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
--------	----	---	---	---	----

Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

8. Our group members avoid labeling other people and their ideas.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
--------	----	---	---	---	----

Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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9. Our group members actively solicit feedback from others that can help the team arrive at a more realistic appraisal of its decisions.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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10. Our group members take reasonable risks.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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11. Our group members use moral justification to support the group's decisions.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
------------	----	---	---	---	----

Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
--------	----	---	---	---	----

Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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12. Our group members feel empowered to question the wisdom of the majority.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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13. Our group members joke and laugh about potential dangers that may result from the group's decisions.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

14. Our group members encourage expression of different viewpoints.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

15. Our group members avoid generalizing about the characteristics of others.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

16. Our group members develop elaborate justifications for the group's decisions.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

17. Our group members are realistic in assessing the group's ethics.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

18. Our group members are encouraged to bring up contrary information after a decision has been made.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

19. Our group members have a long and penetrating discussions before achieving unanimity.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

20. Our group members pressure those who disagree with the thinking of the majority.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

21. Our group members react to criticism with ready-made excuses.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

22. Our group members freely express their doubts about the plans and decisions of the majority.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN

23. Our group members encourage dissent even after a decision has been made.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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24. Our group members pay attention to clear warnings of danger or trouble ahead.

Curriculum	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Assessment	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Safety	AA	F	S	O	AN
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Discipline	AA	F	S	O	AN
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APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

May, 2014

Dear High School Administrator,

Approximately one week ago, you received a request to participate in a dissertation research study I am conducting for my Ed.D. in Administration and Supervision at Loyola University Chicago. My dissertation is entitled Decision Making of Building Level Administrators and Their Perceptions on Groupthink.

You may have already completed the survey; if so, thank you so much for providing information that will help school leaders understand how group decision making can affect an educational institution. If you have not yet had a chance to complete the survey, I would truly appreciate you taking the time to do so through the provided link.

Please understand your answers will be kept anonymous and confidential, and at no point will an individual response be available. The information collected within this three-part survey will be used for drawing conclusions after using repeated measures data analysis.

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please feel free to contact Julie Flitcraft at (815)464-4577 or jflitcraft@lw210.org. You may also contact Dr. Janis Fine, Graduate Program Director, Administration and Supervision at jfine@luc.edu.

Thank you again for your consideration and/or participation with my research.

Sincerely,

Julie Flitcraft
Loyola University Chicago

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VITA

Julie Flitcraft is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Zaker. She was born in Oak Lawn, Illinois on October 29, 1982. She currently resides in Hickory Hills, Illinois with her husband and daughter.

Julie attended public schools in Justice, Illinois through the second grade and then through the twelfth grade in Burbank, Illinois. After high school, Julie attended Moraine Valley Community College for two years, from which she then transferred to a four year college. Julie spent two additional years at Eastern Illinois University, where she graduated in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics.

While working as a classroom teacher at Lincoln-Way East High School in Frankfort, Illinois, Julie completed a Type 75 School Administrative Certificate Program at Olivet Nazarene University in 2007. During the time Julie was pursuing this master's degree, she began working as a dean for the high school. In the spring of 2009, Julie began the doctoral program in Educational Administration and Supervision at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois.

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature that appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.