

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 149

EA 019 875

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**TITLE** Teachers' Perceptions of the Emergence of a Middle School Culture: Studying How Culture Develops in Educational Settings.  
**PUB DATE** Nov 87  
**NOTE** 76p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Mobile, AL, November 11-13, 1987).  
**PUB TYPE** Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
**EDRS PRICE** MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.  
**DESCRIPTORS** \*Attitude Measures; Comparative Analysis; Construct Validity; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Hypothesis Testing; \*Middle Schools; Organizational Climate; \*Organizational Theories; \*School Effectiveness; \*Theory Practice Relationship  
**IDENTIFIERS** \*School Culture

**ABSTRACT**

Organizational theorists have viewed organizations as "mini-societies" based upon commonly held cultural values and assumptions, which may serve to revolutionize organizational practices or to bring about new organization structures. The middle school is an example of an educational institution that has arisen as a result of a particular set of cultural values and assumptions. To test various theoretical assertions about organizational culture in educational institutions, this paper proposes conducting an empirical study of the middle school as the unit of analysis. The proposed investigation will define the ideal culture of the middle school as espoused by its advocates in the professional literature. Research instrumentation will be developed to determine the degree to which this ideal culture matches that found in selected middle schools. Two independent sample populations will be utilized. A pilot sample of 100 middle school teachers will generate reliability and validity data. The data gathered from a second sample of 200 middle school teachers will be applied to the two research instruments. The instruments will assess the degree of congruence between teachers' perceptions of the presence of various cultural elements in the middle schools in which they teach and the teachers' concept of the desirability of these factors in an ideal intermediate-level school. (A 64-item reference list is appended.) (Author/CJH)

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMERGENCE OF  
A MIDDLE SCHOOL CULTURE: STUDYING HOW  
CULTURE DEVELOPS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Mobile, AL, November 12, 1987.

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## ABSTRACT

Organizational theorists have recognized that organizations can be viewed as mini-societies based upon commonly-held cultural values and assumptions. These assumptions and values may serve to revolutionize organizational practices or even to bring about new organizational structures. The middle school is an example of an educational institution which has arisen as a result of a particular set of cultural values and assumptions. The author proposes a study to define the ideal culture of the middle school as espoused by middle school advocates in the professional literature, and to develop instrumentation to determine the degree to which this ideal culture matches the culture found in selected middle schools. The degree of congruence between teachers' perceptions of the presence of various cultural factors in the schools in which they teach and the teachers' concept of the desirability of these factors will also be assessed.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In recent years, a strong conceptual base delineating elements of organizational culture has been developed. Organizational theorists argue that organizations function as mini-societies, each having its own unique culture. Culture is usually viewed as the vehicle by which persons determine the meaning of the numerous "fuzzy" events occurring in the complex organizations in which people may work. Organizational cultures develop differently in some types of institutions than in others.

Educational organizations, for instance, tend to develop their cultures around normative institutional practices. Survival of educational institutions depends largely upon their ability to conform to certain institutional rules--teacher certification requirements, grade categories, conformity of curriculum to certain prescribed expectations. More highly technical organizations, on the other hand, rely upon national bureaucracies as a basis for their cultures. A manufacturing plant, for instance, would probably operate closely in accordance with a

predetermined set of company procedures and handle problem solving via a highly structured chain of command.

Although the available conceptual literature contains numerous assertions about the nature of organizational culture in educational institutions, and although the fragments of a theory exist, a solid empirical base testing these assertions is virtually non-existent. If these assertions were applied to various units of analysis within the larger framework of educational institutions, the relevance of the assertions to institutions within a given category (e.g., public universities, parochial schools, middle schools) could be determined. The findings of such empirical studies would then serve as a basis for rejecting, accepting, or refining the theory of organizational culture as regards application to various specific units of analysis.

In the present study, the middle school will serve as the unit of analysis. The middle school is an interesting unit of analysis for at least two reasons. First, since the middle school is a rather recent addition to the educational system of the United States, it would be considered to have more of an

evolving culture than a stable one; and second, since the middle school has arisen as an alternative to the previously established junior high school, it would be interesting to determine the degree to which the middle school has been able to develop an institutional identity distinct from that of the junior high.

### Organizational Culture

Many a student of organizational theory would view organizations as purely rational systems operating in accordance with scientific principles of management. In such a view, organizational behavior is reduced to a structural chart depicting the various levels of the organizational hierarchy, the chain of command, and the technical relationships among the various subunits of the organization. This rather logical picture of organizational life has been challenged by a host of writers who suggest that organizational life is too complex to be explained fully by such a static view of reality, and that the structural perspective is but one of many ways to understand organizational life.

Among the proponents of this non-static 'multiple views' theory are Bolman and Deal (1984), who have proposed four conceptual "frames" for viewing what goes on in organizations, and Morgan (1986), who has

conceptualized eight distinct "metaphors" for interpreting organizational reality. The purpose of both Bolman and Deal's frames and Morgan's metaphors is to provide a variety of ways to sort through the complexities of organizations. Morgan (1986) illustrates this perspective as follows:

Any realistic approach to organizational analysis must start from the premise that organizations can be many things at one and the same time. A machinelike organization designed to achieve specific goals can simultaneously be: a species of organization that is able to survive in certain environments but not others; an information-processing system that is skilled in certain kinds of learning but not in others; a cultural milieu characterized by distinctive values, beliefs, and social practices; a political system where people jostle to further their own ends; an arena where various subconscious ideological struggles take place; an artifact or manifestation of a deeper process of social change; an instrument used by one group of people to

exploit and dominate others; and so on. . . .

If one truly wishes to understand an organization it is much wiser to start from the premise that organizations are complex, ambiguous, and paradoxical. (pp. 321-322)

### Viewing Organizations as Cultures

One of the many ways of understanding organizations is to perceive them as cultures, much in the same way that a sociologist or anthropologist would examine the patterns of development in a particular society (Bolman & Deal, 1984; Morgan, 1986; Schein, 1985). In a cultural sense, organizations are mini-societies made up of socially connected groups of individuals. The culture of an organization develops out of social interactions between group members based on a set of commonly accepted social norms and customs (Morgan, 1986). From these norms and customs evolves what Schein (1985) has called the "core mission" or primary task for the existence of the organization.

Social scientists have defined organizational culture in a number of ways. Early definitions focused upon overt behavior patterns observed in the actions of individuals within a particular organization. Goffman



(1967), for instance, focused upon "ritual elements" of social interactions among people within a group or society, including the development and maintenance of a person's or organization's public "face." Similarly, Homans (1950) defined a working group's culture as a set of behavioral norms based upon commonly held values concerning working conditions. Although the pioneering work of Goffman, Homans, and other early theorists is noteworthy, their behavior-oriented definitions of culture have since been rejected. Overt behavior patterns are left out of contemporary definitions of culture since behaviors are viewed as being reflections of situational contingencies as much or more so than they are of group culture itself (Schein, 1985).

A second generation of definitions of culture focused upon the collective values held by those in an organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982), for instance, looked upon an organization's ability to develop a core set of common values as its ability to mold groups of people into a unified whole. Willower (1984) defined culture as "the peculiar set of traditions, values, norms, and other social structures and processes that characterize a particular organization" (p. 36). A similar definition was proposed by Ouchi (1981) who

viewed culture as a group philosophy used to guide employees toward accepting organizational policies.

More recent definitions of culture have focused upon the meaning of organizational events (Bolman & Deal, 1984; Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Morgan, 1986; Smircich, 1995) and upon group problem solving dynamics (Schein, 1985; VanMaanen & Barley, 1985). Bolman and Deal (1984) described organizational life as a series of ambiguous events, and conceived of culture as a set of processes which help a group sort through these ambiguities. These cultural processes center about the organization's ability to create a set of symbols to describe the reality of its internal events. This concept of culture formation is illustrated by Morgan (1986, p. 128) who defines culture as "a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances or situations in distinctive ways."

The process of giving meaning to events can be taken yet one step further. Once meanings are derived for ambiguous events, these meanings can serve as a basis for future organizational actions. Medical students' instruction in emergency room care is a good example of this process. Students are taught to

recognize certain physical symptoms and to act in specific ways contingent upon the particular symptoms present. Meaning is attributed to each symptom or set of symptoms to reduce uncertainty in determining a victim's immediate medical needs. This concept of attributing meaning to events is reflected in VanMaanen and Barley's (1985) definition of culture as a set of taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and values that serve as a means for dealing with group problems. In the previous example, the instructor hoped to instill in each student a set of assumptions which would serve as a basis for interpreting and acting upon future medical emergencies.

In educational organizations, the set of assumptions for dealing with group problems is instilled in a less direct manner. One of the main ways cultures are developed in educational institutions is through a pattern of interacting work roles (Schein, 1985). Each work role within an organization may be viewed as a personalization of a particular set of group-held values and beliefs. Teachers, for example, become the personalization of instruction. They may be viewed as storehouses of knowledge or as possessors of skills to facilitate learning. Principals are often

viewed as the personalization of order and structure in the school. As individuals both within and without the organization come to identify organizational members with their work roles, a system of interrelationships develops based upon each member's sense of belonging to the organizational "team."

The purpose of the organizational team is to work toward attaining the organization's core mission while simultaneously working toward integration of group members into a unified whole. Culture may be viewed, then, as a learned product of group experience. Culture is transmitted to group members who over a period of time learn the appropriate organizational responses to problems that arise within the organization. These responses eventually become taken-for-granted assumptions once they have proven to solve problems repeatedly and reliably over time. Assumptions, in turn, serve as a basis for achieving the organization's core mission.

This notion of culture as learned problem solving is reflected in the definition of culture as:

a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of

external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

(Schein, 1985, p. 9)

This definition of culture will be used for the purposes of the present study since this view synthesizes the major conceptual definitions found in the literature, and since the definition can be operationalized in an appropriately broad conceptual framework. In addition, any problem solving strategies carried out by members of an organization to achieve the organization's core mission will be viewed as attempts to attribute meaning to organizational phenomena. This emphasis reflects the views of the 'culture as meaning' theorists noted above.

#### Levels of Culture

Schein (1985) has conceived of organizational culture as operating at three levels. At the most visible level are the organization's artifacts and creations, i.e., its constructed physical and social environment. Elements of culture at this level include specific organizational technologies, art (including

symbols, myths, stories, and legends), and overt behaviors. At the intermediate level, culture is manifested in organizational values. At this level, events are analyzed and assigned meaning in accordance with a sense of what ought to be. Values become a guide for decision making behavior based upon convictions the group holds about reality; hence values tend to predict behaviors.

Artifacts and values tend to facilitate reliable solutions to organizational problems. Over a period of time, those solutions which have consistently produced desired results are transformed into invisible, unconscious, habitual assumptions. This group of underlying assumptions comprises Schein's deepest level of culture. Assumptions are essentially perceptions of the way things are by nature; hence assumptions become windows to the world of organizational events. In sum, assumptions provide organizational members not only with an understanding of what goes on in an organization, but also with a sense of how organizations ought to operate.

#### Features of Culture in Educational Organizations

Much of what has been said about organizational

culture to this point can be generically applied to life within any organization. There exists, however, a body of conceptual literature which describes the culture of educational organizations (and other institutional organizations) as distinct from the cultures of more highly technical institutions (e.g., manufacturing firms).

Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) proposed that institutional organizations, and more particularly educational organizations, are structured according to a different organizational model than are technical organizations. The technical model of organizational structure is based upon a series of relationships among the various technical production processes that go on in an organization, and in effect, depicts the organization's structure as a blueprint for goals, activities, and policies. In a petrochemical company, for instance, the production department relies upon the shipping department to keep an adequate supply of raw materials on hand, the maintenance department to ensure that machinery is operating properly, and the quality control department to detect defects in the production process.

By contrast, the institutional model views the

relationships among the various subunits which make up the organization as being much more loosely related to one another. This series of loose relationships among subunits has been described as "loose coupling" (Weick, 1976). The relationship between the principal's office and the school counselor's office is a good illustration of this concept--both offices perform functions which, though ultimately interrelated, remain relatively unattached from the functions of the other office.

Loose coupling is evident in a number of educational practices. A prime example is instructional supervision. Educational administrators develop and maintain the assumption that the professionals at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy (i.e., teachers) are operating within accepted rules and guidelines and can therefore be trusted to perform their teaching duties without the need for close supervision. The presence of a structural hierarchy within the school gives society the image of administrative control over teachers' instructional practices and therefore becomes a justification for those practices. At the same time, the technology of teaching continues to operate largely



unchecked, the rare exception being the principal's annual contractual observation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

The formal organizational structure of educational institutions not only preserves their social images, but also gives the institutions the appearance of rationality (Meyer & Rowan, 1978). Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) cite this 'appearance of rationality' theme as the explanation for the wide-scale homogeneity of school structure throughout American school systems. Schools attempt to adapt their hierarchical arrangements to fit the generally accepted model of schooling, yet instruction and other technical activities are actually uniquely adapted to the needs of each school and, therefore, intentionally "decoupled" from schools' formal organizational structures (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Scott, 1987).

As stated earlier, Schein's (1985) definition of culture stresses a group's ability to develop assumptions to be used in solving problems of both "external adaptation" and "internal integration." By conforming to the institutional structural model, schools establish a framework which enhances the development of culture. The institutional model's appearance of rationality serves as an aid in solving

external adaptation problems: the public seldom tends to question school practices since appropriate controls have been put into place to ensure that teachers will correctly perform their instructional duties. At the same time, however, the model's loose structure allows teachers a maximum amount of freedom in addressing internal integration problems, i.e., problems centering about ways in which teachers can work together to shape technical processes to meet actual school needs. Although both internal and external adaptation problems must be addressed if the school is to develop a culture which will meet its needs, Meyer and Rowan (1977) assert that organizational survival is most dependent upon solving the external adaptation problems.

Stated differently, schools exist primarily to maintain a "schooling rule" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978), i.e., the sum total of all the ritualistic requirements schools must meet in order to conform to society's image of what a school should be. These ritualistic requirements include program accreditation, certification of personnel, classification of students, and guidelines for teacher evaluation. The ultimate success or failure of schools is more frequently judged "according to their conformity to [these] institutional

rules, rather than by the effectiveness of their technical performance" (Meyer, Scott, & Deal, 1983, p. 56). The public, for instance, would tend to be impressed by the fact that the local high school has gained regional accreditation even though the school may be graduating students who can barely read at a functionally literate level.

### External Adaptation Issues in School Culture

As previously noted, Schein (1985) defined three levels of organizational culture, namely artifacts, values, and assumptions. Organizational artifacts (behaviors, technologies, etc.) come to produce a set of values, which, if held long enough by enough members of the culture, become taken-for-granted assumptions. This process is evident in a school's adoption of new institutional rules or structures. An example of this process would be the adoption of the kindergarten as an essential part of the American public educational system.

In the 1960's, the public education system in the United States consisted of 12 grades. Parents wishing to have their children educated prior to enrollment in the first grade relied upon private nursery schools or kindergartens. In the 1970's, however, public schools

began experimenting with the kindergarten as an optional preschool experience (Robinson, 1987). Austin (1976) reports that this period of experimentation was due in part to the larger social concepts of freedom and humanitarian principles of living developed by Western societies during the preceding two decades. It was believed that a great deal more could be done to foster the cognitive, social, and emotional growth of young children than had been done in previous years.

With this belief in mind, the Head Start program began in the mid-1960's to combat the effects of poverty on the lives of disadvantaged preschoolers. Once this artifact was introduced into public schooling, educators and private citizens began to form a set of values associated with learning at the preschool level. These values, in turn, led educators and private citizens to form assumptions about the necessity of kindergarten as a preparation for the first grade. Once these assumptions were adopted, formal measures were taken (via acts of state legislatures and changes in state and local school policies) to make kindergarten a mandatory part of a child's public education experience. Specific practices also emerged as being the things that

kindergartens "just do" if they are to be kindergartens (Goodlad, Klein, & Novotney, 1973). Hence, the adoption of a set of assumptions about the benefits of a preschool education to a child's success in school led to states' mandating kindergarten as a part of the public education system.

Since that time, when educators have confronted problems with children being developmentally ready for the first grade, the same set of assumptions has been used as a basis for solving those problems. Students about to enter the first grade, for instance, may be viewed by teachers as being too immature or as lacking the skills essential to success in the first grade. Applying the assumption that preschool education is beneficial to a child's development of readiness for school, educators have in many cases developed testing procedures (e.g., Gesell Institute of Human Development, 1978, 1979) for determining readiness for school, and have created additional levels of preschool education designed to meet the needs of children who do not meet the readiness criteria for entry into kindergarten (Bear & Modlin, 1987).

Assumptions about the value of preschool education have now become widely accepted. In a recent

labeling as "first order change" mere structural rearrangements, and as "second order change" actual changes in the frames of reference with which organizational members view organizational problems.

Examples of surface or first order change are rampant in educational institutions. New curricula are introduced to replace outdated materials, yet many teachers continue to teach the same material they have taught for years. Promotional requirements are tightened due to a large number of students passing from grade to grade without required skills, yet a building-level committee may still socially promote the majority of those who would have been retained. Computers are placed in classrooms, yet teachers are not provided with the necessary training to use them. Considering these examples, it is no wonder that Sarason (1971) concludes that as regards most educational change processes, "the more things change the more they remain the same" (p. 2).

Deeper level changes occur at the values and assumptions levels. These changes are effected from within the organization by institutionalized norms and values, and gain legitimacy once they have been subjected to "social evaluations, such as the

survey, Robinson (1987) reported that kindergarten programs have become a part of the public education system in all 50 states, and that 39 states now offer kindergarten programs to 100% of the five-year-olds who request them. That children should have the opportunity to enter public school at age 5 seems to be a "given" in the 1980's (Robinson, 1987). The common practice of referring to various school structures as K-3 or K-6 (as opposed to 1-3 or 1-6) is further evidence of the kindergarten's adoption into the formal school structure (Headley, 1965). A school district operating without a kindergarten would probably be viewed as lacking one of the essential elements of schooling. A person moving into such a school district would be prone to question the system immediately, even if the practices employed by the schools were exemplary. Failure of the district to conform to this accepted rule for successful public school systems could jeopardize its standing with the public.

#### Internal Integration Issues in the School Culture

Schein (1985) has described the process of internal integration as the process by which members of an organization become a group:

The process of becoming a group is simultaneously (1) the growth and maintenance of relationships among a set of individuals who are doing something together and (2) the actual accomplishment of whatever they are doing. (p. 65)

This process is similar to Purkey and Smith's (1983) idea of developing a "sense of community" and Morgan's (1986) concept of "team building." Developing a sense of community or a team concept involves practices such as encouraging group members to become enthusiastic about their work, creating a climate in which members are free to share their ideas and problems to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions, developing a network of collegial relationships, and promoting a philosophy of innovation (Purkey & Smith, 1982). Development of this spirit among a group of teachers within a school is one of several factors which Sergiovanni (1984) cites as separating an excellent school from a merely competent one.

Internal integration (team building) is effective to the extent to which organizational members arrive at common perceptions as to what should go on in the organization. Given that educational institutions are



generally loosely coupled systems, and given that loosely coupled systems tend toward a higher degree of ambiguity than do more densely coupled technical systems, it would be assumed that members in educational institutions would have a larger burden in constructing some type of social reality than would their counterparts in technical organizations. Rowan (1982) has suggested that in response to institutional ambiguity educational institutions often rely upon institutionalized norms, values, and technical lore (e.g., common vocabulary to describe school processes) to give reality to organizational life.

In educational institutions, sense making is often based upon the use of symbols rather than reference to organizational policies. Weick (1976) addressed sense making in loosely coupled systems as follows:

[U]nder conditions of loose coupling one should see considerable effort devoted to constructing social reality, a great amount of face work and linguistic work, numerous myths, . . . and in general one should find a considerable amount of effort being devoted to punctuating this loosely coupled world and connecting it in some way in which it can be

made sensible. (p. 13)

Making sense of life in educational institutions requires organizational members to rely upon a number of symbols, including organizational myths, stories, rituals and metaphors.

Organizational myths have been defined as assumptions made to protect people from uncertainty, but not intended to be empirically tested (Bolman & Deal, 1984). Among the myths most widely held by educators is the myth of teacher professionalism. According to Meyer and Rowan (1978), this myth serves not only to legitimate the status of teachers, but also to create an atmosphere of mutual respect among teachers, thus enhancing social cohesiveness. The actual organizational structure of a school can also serve as a myth. Meyer and Rowan (1977) assert that loosely coupled systems tend to be built around organizational structures that give the appearance of control. Behind the ceremonial facade, however, teachers carry on most of the work of teaching uninspected. Institutional practices are legitimated not by inspection and control, but by a "logic of confidence" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978), that is, by a professional honor system in which institutional members

place trust in the performance of their peers.

Institutional stories are also a medium used to convey information or values in a form that is easy to remember. Stories can reinforce or build faith in institutional practices:

A school administrator responded to [evaluators'] questions about a new reading program by recounting stories of several children whose ability to read had increased dramatically. As evaluators talked to teachers, parents, and students, the same stories were told repeatedly and new ones were added. Achievement scores became irrelevant data. (Bolman & Deal, 1984, p. 15)

Rituals also convey culture. Certain institutional events are done for clearly ceremonial reasons; others become rituals due to long term repetition. The beginning of the day rituals held in most public schools tend to lose all but ritualistic meaning over time. It is doubtful that the average first grader fully understands the patriotism inherent in the words of the pledge of allegiance, or that the average ninth grader actually engages in prayer during the traditional 'moment of silent meditation.' These

rituals do, however, tend to serve symbolically as a cohesive activity with which to begin the school day. Commencement exercises are another highly ritualistic and symbolic practice. They not only serve the purpose of honoring graduates, but also legitimate the activities of the system which has schooled the graduates.

Many organizations further rely upon metaphors to make sense of organizational phenomena. According to Bolmen and Deal (1984), metaphors are used to compress complicated issues into understandable images. A principal may attempt to sell a faculty on the concept that their school is a factory designed to turn out knowledgeable students. Another principal, however, might view the school as a shopping center that offers a variety of goods to the clientele. In both cases, the work of schooling youngsters is greatly oversimplified, although the conflicting concepts of the student as raw material and as consumer illustrate fundamental differences in the meaning that each principal has attributed to the events.

#### The Role of Organizational Culture Processes of Change

Organizational culture has been described as a set of assumptions for problem solving, as a method for

determining organizational survival, and as the process of attributing meaning to events which occur in organizational life. However, culture may also be viewed as an impetus for organizational change. The change process as discussed here refers to changes in the programmatic or philosophical policies of educational institutions.

If culture is defined as assumptions for group problem solving (Schein, 1985), it would follow that culture should serve as a major impetus for organizational change since change represents problem solving in action. Morgan (1986) argued that culture is in essence the enactment of shared reality. When this shared reality is forced upon an existent organizational structure or policy, an organizational change results.

Schein (1985) warns, however, that much of what is called change, involves mere surface rituals rather than the fundamental structural adaptations which sustain these rituals. Change may be of this surface variety or it may extend to the deeper values or assumptions levels of the organizational culture. Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) differentiate these two levels of change in a similar fashion.

endorsement of legislatures or professional agencies" (Rowan, 1982, p. 259). Sarason (1971) recognized that true change involves observing existing behavioral regularities that one does not like or that do not meet organizational needs, and proposing a set of specific "intended outcomes" to which a person or group may become committed. The example cited earlier of the evolution of the kindergarten in the American public educational system is a fitting illustration of this type of change.

True change is often the result of a strong cultural leader, a highly symbolic "religious" individual who effectively communicates the organizational purpose (Firestone & Wilson, 1984). In schools, this person is usually the principal. Sergiovanni (1984, p. 7) describes the principal's role as that of being a symbolic leader:

The symbolic leader assumes the role of "chief" and by emphasizing selective attention (the modeling of important goals and behaviors) signals to others what is of importance and value. Touring the school; visiting classrooms; seeking out and visibly spending time with students; downplaying

management concerns in favor of educational ones; presiding over ceremonies, rituals, and other important occasions; and providing a unified vision of the school through proper use of words and actions are examples of leader activities associated with [cultural leadership].

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to assess a sample of middle school teachers' perceptions of the presence of various cultural factors within the school environment and to determine the degree of congruence between the teachers' self-reported concept of an ideal middle school culture and their perceptions of the presence of these cultural factors in the schools in which they teach.

#### Organization of the Study

A scale of Likert-type items will be developed to assess the presence of cultural elements that the related literature states ought to be in place in middle schools. A similar scale with the items slightly reworded will be developed to assess the teachers' concept of an ideal middle school culture.

The two measures will be administered to a pilot group of 100 teachers from three school districts in southern Louisiana. Alpha reliability coefficients will be computed for each measure. A factor analytical technique will be used to determine the construct validity of the two measures.

The two instruments will be administered to 200 different middle school teachers randomly selected from the same three school districts utilized for the pilot study. Approximately 40% of the sample will be selected from middle schools judged to be "exemplary" by various state and local recognition programs. The other 60% will be selected from schools that have not received such a distinction.

The following null hypotheses will be subjected to empirical testing to determine the validity of the measures developed for the purposes of the present study:

(1) No interpretable culture constructs will be obtained when responses on the "culture perceiver" measure are intercorrelated and factor analyzed using the R-technique.

(2) No interpretable personal culture constructs will be obtained when responses on the "personal



concept" measure are intercorrelated and factor analyzed using the R-technique.

Assuming that the two above null hypotheses are rejected, and that the validity of the two instruments is supported, the following research hypotheses will also be subjected to empirical testing:

(3) There will be a statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' concept of an ideal middle school culture and their perceptions of the presence of elements of middle school culture in their schools.

(4) Teachers in the "exemplary" middle schools will, as a group, report a statistically significant higher incidence of elements of middle school culture than those in the "average" middle schools.

(5) Personal concept scores for those teachers in the "exemplary" middle schools will, as a group, be more highly positively correlated with their cultural perception scores than will be the teachers' scores in the "average" schools.

All tests of statistical significance will use an alpha level of .05.

#### Limitations of the Study

The sample selected for the present study will consist of middle school teachers from three Louisiana public school districts. Results may not generalize to teachers who teach in middle schools in other demographic or regional areas.

Teacher perceptions are used to measure both cultural elements and teachers' personal concept of the middle school culture. These measures are limited to the extent that teachers' perceptions of the nature of the school culture may be inaccurate and to the extent that teachers' self-reported concept of an ideal culture may be affected by desirability of response.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

In a day when educational innovations frequently come and go, the permanence of the American middle school is particularly noteworthy. Middle schools began developing as an outgrowth of the long-standing junior high school in the early 1960's, and have become prominent in the 1980's. Despite the growth in the number of schools using the name "middle school," however, many schools still exist under the name "junior high school." There exists a vast body of literature describing the nature of the middle school, and illustrating its distinctions from the junior high school.

#### Definitions of the Middle School

Early definitions of the middle school (e.g., Cuff, 1967; Murphy, 1965) focused upon the grade levels served with little emphasis upon qualitative aspects of the educational program. Cuff (1967), for example defined the middle school as a school that included at least grades seven and eight, with no grades below four or above eight. Eichhorn (1966) was one of the first writers of the middle school movement to emphasize the

child as a focus of meaning. He identified the middle school learner as a "transescent"--a developing youngster in the transition between childhood and adolescence. A wealth of literature has been devoted to the study of the unique needs of students at this stage of development.

Schmidt (1982) and Thornburg (1980) characterized the middle school youngster as being in a continual state of crisis due to the major physical, social, emotional and cognitive changes that occur at this age level. If middle schools are to be effective, programs must be developed that address the vast array of student needs associated with these changes rather than emphasizing academics alone (Clark & Clark, 1986; Lipsitz, 1984). This concept is stressed in DeVita, Pumerantz, and Wilklow's (1970) definition of the middle school as "a philosophy and belief about children, their unique needs, who they are, and how they grow and learn" (p. 25).

Although the importance of focusing the educational program upon the needs of the student is a vital element in the philosophy of the middle school, there is evidence that this element is not unique to middle school education. Yoder (1982), for instance,

contends that schools at any level must be student-centered if they are to be effective. This opinion was supported by the findings of a recent school effectiveness study in which Wimpelberg (1986) found that principals in effective elementary schools tended to report the centrality of students in their statements of their schools' missions.

Alexander and George (1981) proposed one of the better definitions of the middle school, one which reflects the array of student needs mentioned above:

We believe that an adequate concept of the middle school must view it as a bridging school. . .that is focused on the educational needs of the learners who are usually in the transition from childhood to adolescence. . . . We define a middle school as a school of some three to five years between the elementary and high school focused on the educational needs of students in these in-between years and designed to promote continuous educational progress for all concerned. (p. 3--emphasis in original)

A History of the Middle School Movement

The middle school movement had its original roots in the junior high school, an institution which began to gain popularity just after the turn of the twentieth century. The original goals of the junior high were:

- (1) to teach college preparatory subjects earlier,
- (2) to keep students in school longer through a revised and enriched curriculum,
- (3) to bridge the gap between elementary school and high school, and
- (4) to meet the needs of early adolescents.

(Schmidt, 1982, p. 2)

This institution served the country for nearly 50 years. In the late 1950's, however, educators began to realize that the junior high was no longer meeting the needs of the students it served for at least three reasons. First, the junior high of the fifties suffered from goal erosion--the original, well-intentioned goals of the junior high had become virtually meaningless (Schmidt, 1982).

Second, Regan (1971) cites the junior high school's lack of a unique identity as a reason for its eventual demise. Few states recognized the uniqueness of teaching at this level by requiring junior level

certification for teachers (Moss, 1969). In addition many writers of the middle school movement (e.g., Alexander & George, 1981; Eichhorn, 1966) have emphasized the fact that most junior highs were organized as miniature high schools. Moss (1969) identified this organizational quality as "the sharpest criticism leveled against the junior high school" (p. 13).

A number of practices served to identify the junior high school as an emulator of "big brother" (Moss, 1969). The trichotomy of grades 7, 8, and 9 was a reflection of the three high school grades, and extracurricular programs offered at the junior high were often organized after the pattern of similar activities found in high schools. Most of these activities were designed as incentives for students to stay in school after completing the junior high grades rather than as activities suited to the actual needs of the students at this level. In addition, since students in ninth grade were earning Carnegie units, the school had to conform to the rigid scheduling patterns of the high school.

Eichhorn (1966) identified a third reason for the demise of the junior high school, namely the emphasis

upon subject matter rather than the needs of the learners. This third fault of the junior high became one of the primary reasons for the rise of the middle school. According to surveys conducted by Alexander (1968, 1971), a number of other factors gave rise to the development of the middle school. These factors included overcrowding of elementary schools, desegregation, and the desire to remove students in grades 5 and 6 from the rigidity of the self-contained classroom.

From its beginnings the middle school grew rapidly in popularity. Schmidt (1982) traces the growth of middle schools in the United States from 100 schools in 1960 to over 12,200 in 1981. It is interesting that statistics for the year 1983 show a decrease in the actual number of middle schools in existence (approximately 11,400), although an increase of approximately 300 middle schools is noted between 1982 and 1983 (Shockley, Holt, & Meichtry, 1985). Future changes in these figures may provide an answer to Alexander's (1971, p. 221) query as to "whether the middle school movement is simply another swing of the school ladder pendulum or a long overdue provision of better education."



Over a period of years, a generally agreed upon philosophy of the middle school evolved, and has, to a large extent, remained relatively consistent for the last 15 years. Baetzel (1971) stated his conception of this philosophy as follows:

- (1) A good middle school ought to provide for a gradual transition from the typical self-contained classroom to the highly departmentalized high school.
- (2) Provision should be made by program and organization for each student to become well known by at least one teacher.
- (3) The middle school ought to exist as a distinct, very flexible, and unique organization tailored to the special needs of preadolescent and early adolescent youth. It ought not to be an extension of elementary nor seek to copy the high school.
- (4) The middle school ought to provide an environment where the child, not the program, is most important and where the opportunity to succeed exists. (p. 153)

Practices Commonly Attributed to Ideal Middle Schools

Many writers have set out to identify those practices which they feel are essential to an effective middle school organization. The following four practices are among those most frequently mentioned in the literature, and all four are mentioned in the work of several noted authorities in the field (Alexander, 1981; Middle Level Education Council of the NABSP, 1985; Schmidt, 1982).

First, the advisor-advisee program is an attempt to improve the middle level guidance program. Guidance is viewed as involving every member of the school staff. Students are given the opportunity to participate in regularly scheduled sessions in which they interface with a group of peers and a teacher advisor. This setting provides students an outlet for their emotional concerns and gives teachers the opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of their students' needs. The advisor-advisee program is an embodiment of the philosophical assumption that the middle school youngster should have the opportunity to become well known by at least one adult in the school, the goal being to smooth the transition from the single teacher in the elementary grades to complete departmentalization in the senior high grades.

Second, flexible scheduling patterns including block scheduling are recommended by middle school educators as a way to reduce the rigidity of the 50 minute class period, and to provide a transition between the self-contained and departmentalized environments. Rather than assuming that all subjects require the same amount of time, larger time blocks are devoted to several subjects. A teacher qualified to teach social studies and language arts might, for example, see the same group of students for a two-hour ctime block in which the time can be tailored on a daily basis to the particular needs of the students.

Third, closely akin to block scheduling is the notion of interdisciplinary team planning. Teachers are divided into teams, each team consisting of one teacher from each major discipline. Scheduling is arranged so that all the teachers in the team teach a common group of students. All the teachers on a team are given common time for planning. The purpose of the team effort is to allow teachers to plan together now to teach the interrelated concepts within their disciplines.

Finally, exploratory electives rather than year-long electives are also recommended. Exploratory

courses typically are three- to nine-week mini-courses in various areas of interest, e.g., exploratory music, exploratory art, homemaking, foreign languages, computer literacy, vocational training, and industrial arts. The goal of the exploratory courses is to make the elective program more student- and interest-centered.

In summary, the history of the middle school movement consists of two major stages--an initial "breaking away" from the previously established middle school, followed by the middle school's establishment of a unique identity as a new institution with its own philosophy. The middle school philosophy emphasizes that the middle school is a transitional school between the elementary and high schools. Emphasis upon a student-centered environment and upon the needs of rapidly changing youngsters are additional components of the philosophy. Practices frequently recognized as being characteristic of the middle school include the advisor-advisee program, block scheduling, interdisciplinary team planning, and exploratory electives.

Applying the Cultural Framework to Middle Schools

I. applying the framework of organizational culture to the middle school, it is necessary to recall that culture has been defined (Schein, 1985, p. 9) as "a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration." Each component of this definition can, in turn, be used as a means for analyzing cultural elements in the middle school setting.

"A Pattern of Basic Assumptions Invented, Discovered, or Developed"

Middle school culture is essentially a product of the philosophical concepts developed as a rationale for the middle school. The middle school has been in existence long enough that most of these concepts have been transferred from the values level to the underlying, taken-for-granted assumptions level. These assumptions have, in turn, served as a basis for creating new values and artifactual behaviors. Clark and Clark (1986) illustrate this cycle of behaviors in their discussion of the establishment of a new value in middle level education, namely that "middle school effectiveness is more than academics."

Clark and Clark's (1986) argument begins with a

taken-for-granted assumption about middle level education--middle school youngsters have a unique set of needs to which middle level schools should be responsive. This assumption is used as part of a mindset Clark and Clark employ as they interpret the results of the academics-oriented "effective schools" research. The effective schools research, the researchers note, does not mention anything about students' emotional or social needs. On the basis of their original assumption about student needs, the researchers form a value--that the effective schools research does not tell the whole story of effectiveness. The researchers validate their value by surveying administrators of middle schools, and finding that administrators of many effective middle schools judge success by things other than academic achievement. This validated value might be translated into any of a number of artifactual behaviors--more emphasis might be placed upon the development of advisor-advisee programs to address students' emotional needs, principals might be urged to develop more extracurricular or elective activities suited to the needs of their students, or new educational slogans such as "teach the whole child" might be developed.

--

"Assumptions Developed by a Given Group as it learns to Cope with Problems"

When the junior high school began to be regarded as a less than successful institution, educators at the middle level had to seek new values and artifactual behaviors in solving the problem of designing an institution that would work more effectively. Educators began by determining those practices of the junior high which had failed to work, and then set out to replace them with new practices.

The philosophy of the new middle school stressed new values which abandoned the ineffective practices of the junior high school. The links to the high school were severed by moving out the ninth grade. Rigid scheduling was replaced by a model which resembled a marriage between the elementary and high school schedules. Teachers were reprogrammed to focus upon teaching students rather than subject matter.

In order for educators to complete this massive reorganization and reprogramming effort, middle school advocates developed a group of assumptions about what intermediate level education should be. The problem with this approach was that classroom teachers were not

included in the initial planning phases. Not all teachers readily accepted the assumptions or really even knew what they were. As early as 1969, Moss recognized goal clarity as a problem of middle schools. Similarly, Alexander (1974, 1978) cites "lack of planning" as one of the major problems of the middle school movement, and as one of the major causes of teacher turnover in middle schools. Close planning among fellow professionals and within teaching teams in middle schools, on the other hand, has been found to be positively correlated with teacher job satisfaction (Bryan & Erickson, 1970; Pook, 1981).

In the context of Schein's (1985) assertion that cultural assumptions are learned by groups as they work together to solve problems, the practice of team planning might be viewed as one vehicle by which culture is developed in middle schools. This idea is consistent with the findings of Sklarz (1986) who identified collaborative planning, collegiality, and commonly shared goals as characteristics of a faculty involved in a middle school reorganization. Once plans are initiated, teachers have a common set of goals and techniques by which to solve problems. After teacher put these techniques into action, they come back to the



planning sessions and share their successes and failures. Techniques which work over time serve to justify assumptions; those which consistently fail to work serve as a basis for rejecting assumptions.

### "Problems of External Adaptation and Internal Integration"

The middle school originated as a result of the limited effectiveness of the junior high school. The newly-formed structure of the middle school presented to the public an image suggesting that the educational system was being responsive to the needs of students by creating a better institution (Klingeale and Siebers, 1980). The organizational structure of the middle school tended to legitimate the activities going on within the institution although there was no external evidence that the practices espoused by leaders were actually put into place in many schools.

Contrary to Schein's (1985) belief, the problems with the middle school have not been external adaptation problems at all. Klingeale and Siebers (1980) contend that the middle school has escaped the uncomfortable philosophical position previously occupied by the junior high, but has found itself in

another uncomfortable position--failure to establish an identity due to lack of consistent practices. In 1974, one researcher estimated that approximately one-third of the middle schools he had studied were middle schools in name only:

In too many cases a middle school has been organized as an administrative convenience without careful planning of its goals, program, and evaluation. . . . [R]ole and identity have been critical problems in the burgeoning movement. They will remain so until well-developed goal statements are developed for each middle school, and for groups of middle schools under common administrative arrangements. . . . (Alexander, 1974, p. 3)

Studies assessing the degree to which middle schools are implementing distinguishing practices suggest that many middle schools are not living up to their reputations, i.e., that first order changes of school policy have been implemented, but that second order organizational conformity to the new structures is lacking. In a survey of 43 New England middle schools, Gore (1978) found that interdisciplinary

planning and flexible scheduling "were used by respondents in all grades but neither were dominant strategies" (p. 10). Similar results were found in studies of middle schools in Ohio (Bohlinger, 1981), Missouri (Beckman, 1981), and North Carolina (McEwin, 1981).

A recent national review of middle school practices (Binko & Lawlor, 1986) affirms the state by state findings. In addition, after interviewing a number of middle school educators, the researchers in this study found that most of the interviewees could not give a rationale for their schools' programs, nor could they articulate the unique features of their schools. These findings are not so surprising considering that 42% of those surveyed had received no inservice training dealing directly with the middle school concept. The distinguishing middle school practices most commonly reported by the teachers as being "in place" in their schools included differentiation of teaching methods according to student ability and increased attention to the social and emotional needs of the students. Practices regarded as least evident included team planning, advisor-advisee programs, and exploratory electives.

Principals tended to report that more of the practices were present in their schools than did teachers. In addition, teachers in schools over two years old reported that fewer distinguishing practices were present in their middle schools than did teachers in newer middle schools.

These findings suggest that the espoused mission of the middle school may not be evident in actual middle school operation, and that there is a need for a closer working relationship between theory and practice in many American middle schools. Argyris and Schon (1974) have identified this gap between theory and practice as an incompatibility between "theory of action" (a prescriptive set of actions to which an individual gives allegiance and upon request communicates to others) and "theory-in-use" (the theory that actually governs the individual's actions based upon regularities of human behavior in given situations). This trend was also observed in a different organizational setting by Goodlad, Klein, and Novotney (1973) who studied the programs of 201 nursery schools in nine major United States cities:

. . . most of the schools in our sample were providing approximately the same thing.

demonstrating a narrower range of schooling than was implied by their stated goals. . . .

[T]here was an enormous, not just a slight, discrepancy between the list of activities appearing regularly in most nursery schools observed and the list of desired activities compiled by our group of specialists. (pp. 135-136)

The previously cited findings about the absence or espoused middle school practices in middle schools over two years old may also suggest that distinctive educational structures, in an effort to survive, tend to succumb to pressures to adapt to the "schooling rule" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978), even though they may be created as structures which radically break with traditional institutional norms. In a longitudinal study of seven "exemplary" middle schools, Aromi, Roberts, and Morrow (1986) examined the degree to which selected middle school practices had persisted over a thirteen-year period. Although a number of practices had remained stable or expanded over the period, other practices, including team teaching and flexible scheduling, had declined. Included in the researchers' list of explanations for the decline of these practices

were "expectations of the public" and "shifts in the advocacy of educators" (p. 11).

In sharp contrast to the studies which have focused upon the shortcomings of middle school are other studies that have focused upon middle schools which, to a large extent, have implemented distinguishing practices. George and Oldaker (1985), for instance, surveyed administrators in 130 "exemplary" middle schools in 34 states. These schools had been so rated by one of several different state and national recognition programs. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the "textbook" middle school practices were actually in place in effective middle schools. Not surprisingly, the results showed overwhelmingly that these schools conformed to the textbook descriptions of the exemplary middle school-- 90% organized teachers into interdisciplinary teams, 94% used flexible scheduling, 93% employed advisor-adviser programs, and 100% claimed to organize their programs around the needs of the students. Gains in achievement and decline in discipline problems were also cited in the majority of the schools surveyed. Although the researchers admit the obvious selection bias used in the study, they offer their findings as

proof that there are good middle level schools that utilize the practices traditionally espoused by middle school advocates.

In a national survey of the principals of 1443 middle schools, Valentine and Kirkham (1985) found there was a growing awareness among principals of the importance of middle school practices. This study helped to substantiate the perception that middle level schools are beginning to gain a unique identity. Indicators supporting this perception include the following:

(1) The majority of principals surveyed stated that the ideal organizational pattern for the middle-level school is the 6-7-8 grade structure.

(2) The reason most frequently cited by principals for organizational changes in their schools was to provide programs suited to the needs of the middle-level learner.

(3) The majority of principals surveyed felt that there was need for specific training for teachers at the middle level.

Descriptive case studies have been used by a number of authors to tout the advantages of middle schools (e.g., Alexander, 1968; Bryan & Erickson, 1970;

Lipsitz, 1984; Sklarz, 1986). Sklarz (1986) conducted a descriptive study of a successful middle school during a five-year reorganization effort. The researcher focused upon physical, human, educational, and cultural forces involved during the change process, noting that the attention to the development of a middle school culture was the factor most related to the continued success of the school as measured by student achievement and by improvement in teacher, student, and parent attitudes toward the school.

Although descriptive case studies and studies focusing on exemplary schools provide an excellent picture of the way schools ought to operate, they do not provide a very realistic picture of the way things really are. The evidence from previous research overwhelmingly suggests that the majority of middle schools are not really functioning as they should. If the findings of these studies are characteristic of middle school practices at large, there is evidence that middle school educators have done a fairly good job of handling external adaptation problems (presenting a good public image) through emphasis upon organizational procedures (Klingele, 1985), yet have done little about internal integration problems.



(concentrating upon achieving their core mission). This pattern seems to fit with Meyer and Rowan's (1977, 1978) position that educational institutions exist primarily to maintain their own survival, and only secondarily to improve the education of their clientele.

A possible solution to this apparent problem is suggested by Shockley, Holt, and Meichtry (1985), who assert that middle schools must have effective leadership if they are to escape the syndrome of being "caught in the middle" between elementary and high schools. This escape is achieved by educators' working together to establish a unique sense of mission for the middle school. In this approach, principals become cultural leaders devoted to developing in teachers a sense of the school's mission. Valentine and Kirkham (1985) substantiated that this role of the principal was a key to school effectiveness according to the perception of teachers. Shockley, et al. (1985) describe this function of the principal:

The effective middle school administrator must reinforce the values and belief systems of the school through continual symbolic actions. . . . This continuous stream of actions by an

organization's formal leadership clarifies and encourages consensus and commitment to the organization's basic purposes. (p. 3)

If middle schools are to reach their full potential as service institutions, administrators must work to develop this sense of a shared mission among their teachers.

### Teaching in the Middle School

Several research studies have indicated that middle level teachers enjoy their jobs more than do junior high teachers (Ashton, Doda, Webb, Olejnik, & McAuliffe, 1981; Bryan & Erickson, 1970; McGee & Krajewski, 1979; Pook, 1981). These studies further indicate that the job satisfaction of middle school teachers is closely linked to the congruence of their own opinions about teaching with the actual practices employed in the middle schools. In addition, two of these studies (Ashton, et al., 1981; Pook, 1981) suggest that teachers in suburban middle schools report a higher degree of job satisfaction than do teachers in urban middle schools, although no differences are found between urban and suburban junior high teachers.

### Summary of the Empirical Research

Research on middle school practices suggests that a majority of middle schools in the United States are not operating in accordance with standards recommended by writers in the professional literature. This is the case even though many of the same schools have adopted philosophies which say that they ought to be doing these things. Other studies have attempted to draw attention to schools which are known to have adopted the recommended middle school practices. The question remains as to whether the middle school is a viable educational institution or simply a more attractive name given to the old junior high school.

During the 1960's and 1970's, many middle schools were created with minimal planning. In other middle schools, early planning has not included the teachers. This lack of planning has been blamed for teacher dissatisfaction with the practices of the middle school. The implication here is that teachers may not agree with or even understand some of the practices adopted by middle schools, and therefore may not be ready to support them. The cited research also suggests that team planning and clear communication of the school mission among school staff are characteristics found in the more effective middle

schools.

Research on teacher satisfaction in intermediate schools has shown a positive correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and their congruence with the practices espoused by the schools in which they teach. This same body of research has suggested that the location of the middle school may also have an effect upon teacher job satisfaction.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study is to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of the presence of various cultural elements in their schools, and to determine the degree to which teachers feel that these practices ought to be included in an intermediate-level school. This chapter outlines the procedures to be used in conducting this investigation including sample selection, instrumentation, and proposed methods of data collection and analysis.

#### Sample Selection

Two independent sample populations will be utilized for the purposes of the present study. Sample I, the pilot sample, will consist of 100 middle school teachers randomly selected from three school districts in southern Louisiana, one rural, one suburban, and one urban. Approximately one-half of the teachers will be selected from middle schools judged to be "exemplary" by various state or local recognition programs. The other half will be selected from middle schools that have not received such a distinction. This sample will be utilized to generate reliability and validity data

for the instruments to be developed for the purposes of the present study.

Sample II will consist of approximately 240 teachers from the same three school districts who teach in schools using the name "middle school." Selection of this group will consist of a three-step process. In the first step, all middle schools in the three districts will be classified as either "exemplary" or "average" based upon whether the schools have received recognition by any one of several state and local school recognition programs. Verification of the presence or absence of such status will be obtained from the school districts' central office records or from a questionnaire which will be sent to school principals.

In step two, participating schools will be randomly selected as follows:

(1) In both the urban and suburban districts, two "exemplary" and three "average" middle schools will be randomly selected from among each district's list of middle schools.

(2) Due to the small number of middle schools in the rural district, one "exemplary" and two "average" middle schools will be randomly selected from among the

district's middle schools.

In step three, teachers will be randomly selected from each of the participating schools as follows:

(1) In both the urban and suburban district, 22 teachers will be randomly selected from among the full-time faculty of the two "exemplary" schools, and 40 teachers from among the full-time faculty of the three "regular" schools for a total of 75 teachers from each of these two districts.

(2) In the rural district, 20 teachers will be randomly selected from among the full-time faculty of the "exemplary" school, and 30 teachers from among the full-time faculty of the two "regular" schools for a total of 50 teachers from this district.

#### Instrumentation

Two instruments will be developed for use in the present study, one to measure teachers' perceptions of the presence of elements of culture in the middle schools in which they teach, and one to assess the teachers' perceptions of the desirability of these elements in an ideal intermediate-level school. Procedures to establish the reliability and validity of these instruments is described in the data collection and analysis section which follows.

The "culture perceiver" instrument will consist of a series of Likert-type items based upon elements of an ideal middle school culture as espoused by several of the major writers of the middle school movement. For each item respondents will be required to choose the point on a continuum which best represents their perception of the presence of the element in their schools. Some sample items might possibly be:

S1: My school encourages teachers to work together in interdisciplinary teams.

Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ Completely

S2: My school is student-centered in its philosophy.

Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ Completely

The "personal concept" measure will employ the same items, but in a form which captures respondents' degree of personal agreement with the concepts (e.g., "I think teachers should work together as interdisciplinary teams.").

#### Data Collection and Analysis

The 100 teachers in Sample I will be given both instruments to complete. The instruments will be hand delivered to a contact person at each school who will



distribute and collect them at the end of one week. All instruments will be assigned identification numbers so that a follow-up may be conducted if the initial response is poor.

Alpha reliability coefficients will be computed for each instrument using the data collected from Sample I. In addition, an R-technique factor analysis will be utilized to assess the construct validity of the instruments. This analysis will be used to identify what factors exist relative to culture perception. The analysis will further serve as a method for distinguishing which items adequately measure the identified factors, and for eliminating those items which do not. The data obtained from this analysis will be used to test the first two null hypotheses stated in Chapter I.

A modified version of the two instruments based on the factor analysis will be administered to Sample II. Distribution of the instruments and follow-up procedures will be essentially the same as those used with the Sample I administration of the instruments. Data collected from this sample will be used to test the remaining three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3 (the relationship between

respondents' degree of personal agreement with middle school cultural elements and their perception of these elements' presence in their schools) will be tested using a multiple regression analysis with personal agreement and district serving as predictors of culture.

Hypothesis 4 (the relationship of perception of culture to type of school) will also be tested using a multiple regression analysis with type of school serving as the predictor of culture.

Hypothesis 5 (the assumption that teachers in the "exemplary" schools will have a higher correlation between their scores on the two instruments than the teachers in the "average" schools) will also be tested using a multiple regression analysis with respondents' scores on the two instruments serving as predictors of the type of school.

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