CHAPTER 14

HOW SCHOOLS SHAPE TEACHER EFFICACY AND COMMITMENT
Another Piece in the Achievement Puzzle

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INTRODUCTION

For the last three years, Rennae Kelly* has been a sixth-grade teacher in a K-6 school situated in an affluent suburban neighborhood. Prior to assuming that position, Rennae was a highly-regarded teacher at an inner-city middle school. Here Rennae talks about her feelings of competence and satisfaction as a teacher and her beliefs about the conditions in herself and the educational system that contribute to those feelings.

Rennae's Dialogue

I have always known I was meant to be a teacher. There is nothing more satisfying to me than helping students discover they can understand or do something they once

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thought beyond their abilities. That is one reason I took a job at Porter Middle School—an inner-city school with high poverty and low test scores—when all my classmates headed to the suburbs. I expected the going to be rough at Porter. But I felt ready for the challenge. These were kids who had been written off by the system and who really needed someone willing to invest time and energy in them and their futures. It was not easy to win their trust in that first year or to get my “sea legs.” I worked endless hours preparing materials and organizing the classroom, but it felt good. Before the end of that first year, things began to fall into place for me and my students. The everyday routines became familiar, the stress lessened, and the kids were learning. There were behavior problems—some very trying students—but that was to be expected in a rough inner-city school. By the third year, I had a reputation among the students, parents, and the administration as a good and caring teacher who got results.

Three years ago, the pursuit of a graduate degree in education made it necessary for me to change schools. I took this job at Western Middle School. The contrast to Porter could not have been greater. The majority of the kids at Western come from well-off homes and do not lack for anything financially. Moreover, these parents are actively involved and visit the school on a regular basis. Western students also get some of the highest scores on the State assessment. I figured this job would allow me to try out the new pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies that I was learning in my graduate classes. But things have not gone as expected. After the first year at Western, it became apparent to the school administration that I could “get results” with the more difficult students. Therefore, for the past two years, the principal saddled me with all the serious behavior problems in the sixth grade, as I was “most equipped to handle” them. I never imagined how many children from presumably “good” homes suffer from serious social/emotional and attention/hyperactivity problems. More of my day is spent in behavior management than in teaching.

The parents of my students have a great impact on my teaching and school policy. To strengthen the bond between the school and home, parents at Western are allowed to request specific teachers for their children. Once the parents have been allowed to choose me as a teacher, they feel comfortable calling me by my first name, making demands such as wanting to be emailed daily, and finding ways to be at school, all day. The interest and involvement of these parents are encouraging, particularly after working at Porter where parents seldom showed up for report card conferences, much less to volunteer in the classroom. I appreciate the parents, but sometimes they get too involved in the everyday teaching and leave me with that feeling one gets when someone runs her fingernails down the chalkboard.

Added to these factors—my newfound role of disciplinarian and overly involved parents—the principal is determined to keep the test scores at Western at the top of the heap. So, our curriculum does not leave much room for creativity. At least at Porter I was allowed to focus the curriculum to meet my student’s needs and interests. We did not have a third of the materials and supplies I have at Western, but, at least, I was allowed to use those that we did have in the methods I felt would best serve my students. Here at Western it seems that every pedagogical decision needs to be validated by how it will serve to improve test scores.

Lately, I have dreaded walking into the school building. This is not what I envisioned when I signed on to become a teacher. I feel more like a babysitter than a teacher, and I do not feel needed, appreciated, or trusted in the way I was at Porter. Could this be the onset of teacher burnout?

Based on the extensive literature in achievement motivation, there is little doubt about the power that motivation exerts on learners, learning, and the learning environment (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). From the research on goal orientation, interest, and self-efficacy to studies of choice/self-determination and engagement, the paths between motivational constructs and academic achievement have been strongly and consistently charted (Murphy & Alexander, 2000). For example, students who seek to master the content report more personal interest in the domains and topics, and those feel more self-efficacious manifest more positive academic outcomes than those lower in these motivational constructs (Alexander & Murphy, 1998; Bandura, 1977). Likewise, students given more choice and more determination in their own learning and who are more involved and participatory in the educational environment achieve better than others (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Guthrie, 1996). Similarly, the paths between teachers’ motivations and the performance of the teachers themselves, as well as their students, have been equally well established for an array of motivational constructs, including self-efficacy, locus of control, goal orientation, and autonomy (Coldarc, 1992; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschan-}

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy describes teachers’ beliefs in their ability to perform specific tasks in order to achieve desirable educational outcomes (Tschan-
nen-Moran et al., 1998). Teacher efficacy was first conceptualized by RAND researchers when they included two items reflecting locus of control in a larger survey given to teachers (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977). These researchers were surprised at the amount of variance in student achievement and other positive outcomes that these two items were able to explain. These two items reflected both external locus of control (“When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment,” McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978, p. 85) and internal locus of control (“If I try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students,” Berman et al., 1977, p. 137) were named teacher efficacy.

At the same time, Bandura (1977) published his first work on the importance of self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy, according to Bandura, is distinct from locus of control. In fact, Bandura (1997) considered self-efficacy to be the exercise of control, as the title of his most recent text suggests. From this perspective, self-efficacy is the individual’s belief that he or she is able to organize and execute particular actions in order to bring about desired results (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is also distinguished from locus of control theory, which focuses on whether or not the attainment of outcomes is within an individual’s control. For example, it may be within Rennae’s control to call the parents of her students at home every evening; that is, it is within her abilities and power. Thus, we would say she has an internal locus of control. However, Rennae may feel little or no efficacy for this task. In other words, she may not consider herself to be capable of actually making those calls on a daily basis, for whatever reason. In this way, we can think of efficacy as individuals’ choice to wield the control they have.

These two lines of research (i.e., locus of control and efficacy) were merged by Gibson and Dembo (1984) when they created the Teacher Efficacy Scale. This work suggested that efficacy was comprised of two factors, general and personal teaching efficacy. The first factor, general teaching efficacy, refers to beliefs about what teachers’ could do in general and is reflective of the external locus of control item from RAND. The second factor, personal teaching efficacy, assessed beliefs about what responding teachers felt they themselves could accomplish, reflecting the internal locus of control item and Bandura’s self-efficacy theory. This understanding of efficacy and the Gibson and Dembo (1984) measure has dominated the teacher efficacy literature until recently. Catalysts for that shift in perspective were two studies conducted by Tschannen-Moran and colleagues. Specifically, Tschannen-Moran and colleagues (1998) conducted an extensive review of the teacher efficacy literature that offered a new understanding of teacher efficacy rooted in Bandura’s self-efficacy theory. Additionally, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) provided an in-depth review of the measures of teacher efficacy, concluding with a new measure they have developed that was again strongly influenced by Bandura’s theoretical perspective on efficacy.

Although the Tschannen-Moran and colleagues (1998) and the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) reviews afforded important insights into teacher efficacy beliefs and their measurement, the current analysis extends understanding of efficacy in several important ways. First, several recent studies of teacher efficacy have been conducted since the publication of those reviews (e.g., Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Henson, 2000). These works are incorporated in our examination. Moreover, the reviews conducted by Tschannen-Moran and colleagues sought to establish the history of teacher efficacy research in general (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) and later to explore the specific methods for measuring teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Additionally, both of these reviews direct the reader toward an understanding of teacher efficacy from the perspective of Bandura’s theory.

Our intention is not to advocate for any one research perspective or to restrict our analysis to studies that were undertaken from that viewpoint. Consequently, our review incorporates works that reflect the two-factor model of Gibson and Dembo (1984), as well as Bandura’s orientation toward efficacy. Despite our inclusion of multiple perspectives, the underlying meaning of efficacy as a reflection of teachers’ beliefs about their ability to bring about desired outcomes in the classroom remains consistent across the measurement and development of teacher efficacy in the studies analyzed herein.

Finally, our analysis deviates from the work of Tschannen-Moran and colleagues (1988) in that, our primary interest is in the relations between teacher efficacy and sociocontextual factors. It is our contention that teacher efficacy is a changeable and developing construct that fluctuates with experience, knowledge, and interpretation of contextual factors. Thus, efficacy represents both an immediate response and ongoing process evoked throughout individuals’ teaching experience. When Rennae spoke about her expectations for her first position at Porter Middle School, she said she felt up to the challenge. This comment represents Rennae’s sense of efficacy, rooted to a specific time and teaching task set within a specific teaching context.

Teacher Commitment

Commitment is more readily revealed in Rennae’s opening statement: “I have always known I was meant to be a teacher.” Individuals’ commitment to teaching is understood as their emotional or psychological attachment to the profession (Coldarci, 1992). The exploration of commitment in this chapter affords us a focused view of more deeply held and often emotion-
ally laden beliefs teachers have about their profession and their place in it (Kushman, 1992). Furthermore, commitment can be directed toward both student learning and the school as an organization. Rennae reveals her commitment to student learning in her description of her work at Porter. She describes the long hours she put in and her firm belief in her students' abilities to learn. However, in her description of her experiences at Western Middle School, we begin to see some breakdown in her commitment to this particular school. She describes how she arrived ready to take on new challenges and work with new pedagogical strategies. Yet, the focus of the organization, embedded in the principal’s goals and actions, remained on behavior management and the maintenance of high test scores, leaving little room for innovation and creativity.

Although researchers have looked at both teacher efficacy and commitment, the majority of this research has focused on simple relationships with minimal attention to contextual influences. For example, the motivation literature has explored teacher efficacy by focusing on uncovering the link between efficacy and the facilitation of student learning (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). In contrast, the professional development literature has investigated the importance of school contexts on teachers’ affective beliefs, including their commitment to teaching, stress, and professional burnout (Goldarci, 1992; Firestone & Pennell, 1999; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik, & Prollier 1988). Still, little attention has been given to the impact of those affective states on teaching and learning outcomes (Kushman, 1992). Here we examine the motivation and professional development research in order to develop a fuller picture of teacher motivations in situ. That is, we hope to understand how the context affects both teachers’ efficacy and commitment, recognizing the important role each of these plays in positive educational outcomes.

**REVIEW PURPOSE, PARAMETERS, AND PROCEDURES**

As stated, our purpose here is to investigate the associations between the sociocultural context of schools and the motivations of the teachers who orchestrate the learning environment.

We focus on the role of motivation in individual teacher practice, and how this motivation is fostered or diminished by the contextual influences teachers experience in schools. As we saw in the opening vignette, there are multiple factors in the school context that can have an impact on teachers’ motivations. It is our intention to bring these pieces of the achievement puzzle together so that their individual and combined effects can be better visualized. Of course, we recognize that this is an exploratory effort to understand how school context and teacher motivation have been defined, explained, and interrelated in the research literature.

**Guiding Questions**

In order to understand the efficacy and commitment of teachers like Rennae and how their motivations are influenced by the educational context, we undertook a review of the literatures in teacher education and motivation. Given the exploratory nature of the questions we were asking, we felt that a thorough review of the relevant literature would be a critical first step. This review was guided by the following question: How do contextual influences affect teachers’ motivation? Specifically, how do school climate, school leadership, colleagues, opportunities for autonomy and decision making, and constant school aspects such as student characteristics, school facilities, and resources within a school influence the degree and types of motivations teachers experience? This preliminary question was supported by related queries such as: How is motivation defined in the literature and how are contextual conditions characterized? Together these questions provided the framework for a thorough search of the literature.

In our search of the literature, we sought to locate studies that had considered both teacher motivation and school context, looked for discernible patterns in the reported findings, and used those patterns to formulate hypotheses that could guide future research and educational practice. It was through this exploration that we were able to identify teacher efficacy and teacher commitment as central motivational constructs in understanding the role of context on teacher motivation.

**Search Parameters**

We set several parameters for our search of the literature. First, we limited our inquiry to empirical studies of a quantitative nature. We do not discount the power of qualitative research to describe, inform, and extend understanding of educational processes and constructs. However, we felt that a quantitative examination of the literature would be a useful first step to unraveling the relation between teacher efficacy and commitment and the educational context. The constructs in quantitative studies would generally be more specific, with dedicated measures or indicators for those constructs. This would allow us to make more direct comparisons across studies and to discern emerging patterns with regard to teacher motivations and the school or classroom contexts.

We conducted our searches using several academic and educational databases, specifically PsycINFO, Academic Search Elite, and ERIC. We focused our search on peer-reviewed journals that were outlets for research on motivation, teaching, and teacher education. Among the key terms used to guide this search were teacher motivation, teacher efficacy, teacher
commitment, socialization, school culture, school climate, and school context. Given the scarcity of articles meeting our desired criteria, we did not limit the age of the research gathered through our electronic search. Abstracts of the articles culled from these searches were then read to determine the articles' relevance to the current investigation. At this point, qualitative studies were omitted to provide a more consistent lens through which to interpret findings. Theoretical and review pieces were used as background information, to help elaborate and extend our understanding of the central constructs, and to provide greater direction in the data collection via the examination of reference lists. These theoretical and review pieces, however, are not included in the summary table presented and discussed. Rather, those works were used as background to provide detail, definitions, and theoretical elaboration, when appropriate.

Once we had used the electronic databases to identify a pool of suitable articles, we extended our search in two ways. First, we physically examined issues of key teacher education and educational psychology journals for the past 5 years. The journals examined included the Journal of Educational Psychology, Review of Educational Research, Sociology of Education, and Teaching and Teacher Education. This examination targeted the title and abstracts of the published articles. Second, we scanned the reference lists of selected articles, as well as relevant literature reviews, to identify additional articles that might be included in our analysis. Through this process, we were able to locate relevant conference papers and formal reports that were incorporated in our analysis, enhancing our understanding of the constructs of interest.

**Organizational Approach**

As a result of our search procedure, we located a number of articles that dealt with either teacher efficacy, commitment, or both, and that provided data about the school or classroom context. Because we wanted to capture any information in these publications that could help us understand the relationship between teachers' efficacy and commitment and the school context, we examined key dimensions of each article. For instance, we considered how context was conceptualized in terms of its assessment and description. Additionally, we attended to the definitions of efficacy and commitment, in order to ensure consistency of meaning across the works reviewed. This allowed us to analyze how these researchers might interpret Tannen's comments about her experiences and feelings. What would they see as relevant to her efficacy or indicative of her commitment?

We also wanted to know about the teachers and students in these studies. It could be that patterns in teachers' self-efficacy beliefs or their commitment are tied to the grade levels, subject matter, or student populations taught. For example, does it make a difference that Rennae is a middle school teacher and did the type of school district (urban versus suburban) influence her feelings about her own abilities or about the profession? And what about the students who populate the classroom? How do the behavioral problems of her students at Porter or Western Middle School play into Rennae's positive or negative feelings?

Finally, we documented the types of contextual conditions explored in the identified articles. Do the studies provide information on the general school climate, for example, or focus more specifically on administrative practices and support? For instance, how much did the principal's decision to "saddle" Rennae with behavioral problems color her feelings of competence or commitment? Does parental involvement matter in teachers' efficacy beliefs or their investment in their chosen profession?

In the discussion that follows, we offer what we see as emergent patterns across the identified studies that shed light on the potential relationship between teacher motivations and the educational context. We refer to these patterns as emergent because we recognize that they must be subjected to direct empirical testing for confirmation. Still, we feel that these patterns serve as important hypotheses with implications not only for future research but also educational practice.

**EMERGENT PATTERNS**

The quantitative, empirical studies relevant to this investigation cover a broad spectrum of teacher characteristics, school characteristics, and motivation-related outcomes. Additionally, the research agenda of these studies revealed a variety of foci and interests. In order to gain a better understanding and perspective on these foci we first sought to organize the studies gathered in a meaningful way. To achieve this end, we identified seven common contextual factors that were frequently addressed across the studies of teacher efficacy and commitment. Those factors included a general assessment of what we call school climate, but also entailed specific components, such as culture, environment, community, or collective efficacy. In addition to this general assessment several specific components of school context were assessed. Those components were administrator factors (roles or relations), collaboration, teacher involvement in decision making, and teacher autonomy. The final set of factors we considered were more fixed, including demographic aspects of schools such as student background (e.g., socioeconomic status and ethnicity), student achievement levels, student-teacher ratio, teacher salary, resources available to teachers, and the extent to which a school was categorized as disadvantaged, and descriptive teacher factors (e.g., experience, grade level). Table 14.1 provides the list of articles considered in this review, their sampling
### Efficacy

Efficacy can be defined as individuals' belief in their ability to accomplish a particular task (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). This construct serves to explain individuals' reasons for attempting and completing tasks (Bandura, 1977). Teacher efficacy, a specific form of self-efficacy, has been defined as teachers' situation-specific beliefs in their ability to perform the actions necessary to bring about desired outcomes (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Levels of teacher efficacy have been related to various indicators of student achievement (see Fives, 2003, for a review). However, while many studies have demonstrated the important role that teacher efficacy has on teacher practices and student outcomes, few researchers have investigated the factors that influence teacher efficacy, including organizational factors (Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991). From this limited database, we culled five emergent patterns dealing with positive school environments: administrative support, collaboration among teachers, teacher autonomy, decision making, and constant or less modifiable school and background factors.

**Pattern 1: Teachers working in positive school contexts focusing on student learning tend to have higher levels of efficacy.** Several studies investigated the relation between efficacy and school environmental factors that tap into the general atmosphere of the school or the attitudes and beliefs emphasized within the school community. Specific variables related to this atmosphere included school climate, community, and collective efficacy. Several studies demonstrated that a positive school atmosphere is related to teachers with higher levels of efficacy. For example, Henson (2001) found that teachers' perceptions of school climate prior to an intervention significantly predicted personal teaching efficacy at the end of the study. Similarly, Lee and colleagues (1991) found that higher efficacy and positive sense of school community co-occurred. More specifically, school climate in conjunction with teacher efficacy has been conceptualized as a schoolwide focus on
learning (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Midgely et al., 1995), organizational characteristics including student orderliness and sense of community (Lee et al., 1991; Newman et al., 1989), as well as in terms of the schools’ sense of collective efficacy (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Parker, 1994).

A relationship between the school environment and efficacy was found in the extent to which schools emphasize student learning. For example, Midgely and colleagues (1995) investigated the relations between school emphasis on learning versus performance goals and the impact of that preference on teachers’ efficacy. Learning and performance goal orientations are one way that students’ general approach to academic achievement has been described. Individuals espousing performance goals are concerned with looking smart and doing well in order to receive recognition (Meece & Holt, 1993; Nicholls, 1984). In contrast, those with learning goal orientations are interested in mastering or understanding the content matter (Dweck & Legget, 1988). Results from Midgely and colleagues’ work indicated that teachers in middle schools emphasizing learning-oriented goals for students demonstrated higher levels of teacher efficacy than those emphasizing performance goals. Thus, when the entire school community was perceived as encouraging students to achieve a mastery of the content rather than merely demonstrate high performance regardless of understanding, teachers reported higher levels of efficacy.

Rennae draws attention to this notion when she describes her principal at Western and his determination to keep the test scores up, resulting in a tightly packed curriculum. This performance orientation is not a problem in and of itself but Rennae sees this as interfering with her ability to teach more creatively and effectively. In essence, her comments suggest that student performance would come at a cost to student learning. All of this seemingly adds to Rennae’s sense of discouragement with her position and may ultimately affect her sense of efficacy.

Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) found that teachers’ sense of personal efficacy was significantly related to a schoolwide emphasis on academics. In the same study, the researchers found that teachers who perceived that their colleagues set high achievable goals for students and created an orderly and academically oriented environment also reported higher levels of efficacy than those working under different conditions. It is important to note that an emphasis on achievement does not preclude an emphasis on learning-oriented goals. Rather, these two perspectives may work hand in hand to both improve student learning as well as teachers’ sense of efficacy. Focusing on academic achievement may afford teachers a sense of direction and allow them to identify specific goals to pursue and methods to attain them.

School environments have been considered in terms of organizational characteristics or the social organization of the school. Newman and colleagues (1989) considered the influence of a variety of organizational characteristics (e.g., orderliness, teacher influence in decision making, and support for innovation) on teacher efficacy. In their work, organizational characteristics were found to consistently account for a substantial amount of variance in efficacy beyond the influence of background variables, such as students’ socioeconomic level. In similar work, Lee and colleagues (1991) found that the social organization of the school (including teachers’ perception of control over classroom policies, community, orderliness and encouragement of innovations) was strongly related to efficacy. In both studies, perceived orderliness in student behavior and sense of community or consensus were related to teachers’ sense of efficacy.

Two studies tapped the school environment through measures of collective efficacy (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Parker, 1994). Collective efficacy can be defined as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). In theory, collective efficacy is considered to affect the goal setting, motivation, effort, and persistence with challenging tasks or situations of groups. Within school contexts, this collective belief in the schools’ and its members’ ability to bring about desired outcomes, serves as an environmental influence on individual members of the community.

Goddard and Goddard (2001) and Parker (1994) found collective efficacy to be related to teachers’ sense of personal or self-efficacy for instruction. Parker (1994) found evidence to support the role of collective efficacy as a mediator between school background characteristics (e.g., achievement level and socioeconomic status) and teachers’ and administrators’ beliefs about their school’s instructional efficacy (i.e., mean self-efficacy for teaching reading, language, and mathematics). This suggests that background factors may inform the collective efficacy of the school, which is then related to teachers’ beliefs about instruction. In this proposition, the level of collective efficacy may be able to counteract common background characteristics known to decrease individual teachers’ sense of efficacy.

Goddard and Goddard (2001) found collective efficacy to be a significant independent predictor of variation among schools in personal teaching efficacy. These authors modeled the effects of socioeconomic status, prior achievement, and collective efficacy on personal teaching efficacy. They found collective efficacy to be the only significant predictor in this model to the extent that variation in collective efficacy explains variability in personal teaching efficacy above and beyond that explained by other context variables. Again, this suggests that the sense of collective efficacy experienced in a school may serve to mediate the context variables that teachers experience.

It could be that Rennae’s sense of accomplishment at Porter Middle School was tied to the schools’ orientation toward student learning over their test performance. Perhaps other teachers, like Rennae, signed on to
this school with the goal and expectation of investing "time and energy" in these students and "their futures."

Pattern 2: Higher levels of efficacy arise when the administration provides teachers with needed resources and serves as a buffer to forces that constrain teachers' instructional flexibility and creativity. In the opening vignette, Rennae voices frustration and aggravation about decisions made by the administration with regard to her class composition. In any school environment, the administration holds a great deal of power over teachers and can deeply affect their sense of motivation and commitment through the decisions made and the means by which the decisions are attained and communicated.

Several studies have explored the relation between specific administrative practices and teachers' efficacy. Practices that have been explored include supervisor/principal attention to instruction (Chester & Beaudin, 1996), principal leadership (Lee et al., 1991), principals' influence with their superiors (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990), and administrative responsiveness to teacher needs (Newman et al., 1989).

In their review of the teacher efficacy literature, Tschannew-Moran and colleagues underscore the finding that higher levels of efficacy are demonstrated when the administration provides "resources and buffers of disruptive factors but allowed teachers flexibility over classroom affairs" (Tschannew-Moran et al., 1998, p. 220). Administrators must continually find a balance between attending to the needs of the individual teacher or student and the needs of the school as a whole. Rennae perceived the placement of many difficult students in her class as a punishment for doing a good job. It is doubtful that the administration intended this. Rather, they were more likely making a decision for the greater good of the school, believing that Rennae could best meet the needs of those students.

The compelling aspect for our purposes is Rennae's interpretations of those events and the respective impact of these interpretations on her motivation for teaching. Rennae saw the actions of the administration as relegating her to the role of disciplinarian rather than teacher. Thus, the administration, rather than providing a buffer against disruptive factors, actually became a disruptive force. Resolving this tension is a challenging task that requires the joint efforts of both the teacher and the administration that begins with an acknowledgment of the problem. Administrators need to attend to the needs and concerns of their teachers. In turn, teachers like Rennae need to make their needs and concerns known in a professional and honest manner.

Pattern 3: Teachers given the opportunity and encouragement to work collaboratively seem to feel more efficacious. Schools in which collaboration among all members of the school community are encouraged have been found to have more teachers with higher levels of efficacy than schools where such collaboration is less prevalent (e.g., Miskel, McDonald, & Bloom, 1983). For example, Chester and Beaudin (1996) investigated the effects of school practices, such as opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, on changes in new teachers' (novices and new hires) efficacy beliefs from September to February of the school year. Using regression analysis, the researchers found that in low collaboration schools all experienced new hires and most novices reported declines in their efficacy beliefs. No such declines were reported for new hires in high collaboration schools.

Collaboration among teachers has been related to teachers' sense of personal teaching efficacy (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Cheong, 1992) and their general teaching efficacy, or their beliefs regarding what teachers in general can accomplish (Henson, 2000; Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997). In fact, Taylor and Tashakkori (1995) found faculty communication to be one of the strongest correlates with teacher efficacy.

Henson (2000) found that as collaboration among teachers increased over the course of an intervention, during which teachers researched their own teaching, levels of general teaching efficacy also increased. That is, teachers' beliefs about teachers' capabilities, in general, rose. This suggests that a product of collaboration may also be higher beliefs about the potential for teachers as a professional group to make a difference in the lives of students.

In a similar vein, Shachar and Shmuelevitz (1997) found higher levels of collaboration among colleagues to be related to higher general teaching efficacy and efficacy for enhancing student social relations. It makes sense that as teachers collaborate, they gather information about their colleagues' capabilities and this information may, in turn, affect their beliefs about what teachers in general are able to achieve. This notion is supported by the work of Newman and colleagues (1989), who found teacher efficacy and sense of community to be related to teachers' knowledge of other teachers' courses and spirit of innovation. Thus, in environments where they are given both the opportunity and encouragement to combine their efforts, teachers seem to experience greater efficacy for teaching. Rennae's perspective on her teaching takes a decidedly individualistic stance. As such, she offers little insight into how she communicated with or related to her fellow teachers. Whether this was indicative of the environment in which she taught cannot be determined.

Pattern 4: There appears to be a positive relationship between teacher efficacy and both decision making and autonomy. The extent to which teachers are able to participate in decision making at both the classroom and school level has been investigated in conjunction with teacher efficacy to a limited degree. Newman and colleagues (1989) found teacher efficacy to be higher in schools where there were higher levels of shared decision making regarding instruction among teachers. Taylor and Tashakkori (1995) also found teacher efficacy to be significantly correlated to decision participation. However, when other school climate factors were included, decision participation failed to explain much of the variance in teachers' sense of efficacy. These different findings suggest that further investigation may be needed.
Furthermore, they looked at teams with and without scheduled planning time. In this work, teachers in schools organized in teams with planning time experienced higher levels of personal teaching efficacy than teachers in the other two organizational structures.

Student factors have also been considered in conjunction with teacher efficacy. Students’ prior achievement (Goddard & Goddard, 2001), perceived ability level by the teacher (Lee et al., 1991), and track (vocational, general-noncollege, general-college, honors/mixed; Raudenbush et al., 1992) were positively related to teacher efficacy. Student background in terms of socioeconomic and minority status have also been considered with regard to teachers’ sense of efficacy. Findings indicate that students’ socioeconomic status is related to teachers’ sense of efficacy (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Lee et al., 1991). However, the degree of minority concentration in the school was unrelated to teachers’ efficacy (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

Rennae demonstrated unique responses to each of the school environments in which she taught. At Porter, she anticipated that the work would be challenging. Yet, she considered herself up to the task, and described putting in many late hours in order to achieve success. In contrast, she seemed to expect more from the environment at Western. She seemed to assume that the advantages of a suburban school with greater resources and less behavior issues would allow her an opportunity to be more creative and to try new teaching techniques. Instead, she found her curriculum bound by standardized testing and her free time allocated to satisfying parents. Thus, the school structure in terms of its curricular focus may have had a greater impact on Rennae and her ability beliefs than the socioeconomic status of her students.

Teacher background factors of experience (Morrison et al., 1994; Soodak & Podell, 1997) and preparedness (Raudenbush et al., 1992) have been considered in conjunction with teacher efficacy. Morrison and colleagues (1994) reported significant difference in teacher efficacy by experience and grade level, such that preservice elementary teachers had higher levels of efficacy than practicing secondary teachers. Additionally, Soodak and Podell (1997) report changes in efficacy across experience levels. Preservice teachers report high levels of efficacy, which drop drastically in the first two years of teaching, and then gradually increase with experience, although they never returned to the preservice levels. In contrast to experience level, Raudenbush and colleagues (1992) explored teachers’ feelings of preparedness in relation to teacher efficacy. They found that teachers felt greater efficacy for classes in which they felt more prepared to teach. Certainly, coming out of their preservice program, Rennae voiced confidence in her ability to meet the challenges she faced at Porter Middle School. It is also evident from her statement that she encountered certain difficulties in winning over her students, although she apparently suc-
ceeded through her persistence and hard work. In this way, Rennae mirrored the efficacy patterns of teachers in these various studies.

In summary, the relation between efficacy and school structure has been explored in the literature in various ways. This research has demonstrated a connection between school atmosphere, administration practices, collaboration support, parental involvement, and fixed environmental factors and teachers’ sense of efficacy. Overall, the intention of these studies has been to identify the positive linkages between teacher efficacy and educational context.

Commitment

As noted, teachers’ commitment signifies their psychological attachment to and identification with teaching as their chosen profession (Coldarci, 1992). Kushman (1992) forwarded two conceptualizations of this construct: organizational commitment and commitment to student learning. Kushman defines organizational commitment as the “degree that an individual internalizes organizational values and goals and feels a sense of loyalty to the workplace” (p. 6). In contrast, Kushman described commitment to student learning as involving three interrelated components: teacher efficacy, expectations for student success, and “the willingness to put forth the effort required for student learning to occur” (p. 9).

Conceived in these ways, commitment to the organization (i.e., schools) has been shown to be a crucial element in organizational success (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Furthermore, commitment has been related to the successful implementation of change in education reform (Darling-Hammond, 1995), a spark for collaboration, innovation, and a positive work culture (Kushman, 1992). Specifically, organizational commitment is considered a factor in teachers’ intrinsic motivation (Kushman, 1992). Katz and Kahn (1978) contend that internalized organizational values provide a stronger source of motivation than extrinsic rewards and forced rule compliance. Thus, in investigating the effects of contextual factors on teachers’ motivation, commitment becomes an informative measure.

The elements of contextual characteristics were as varied in the commitment studies as they were in the studies using teacher efficacy as the motivational outcome. Across these studies, four themes emerged relative to contextual characteristics. Those themes dealt with school culture or climate (e.g., Coldarci, 1992), relationship between teachers and administration (e.g., Ma & MacMillan, 1999), teachers’ sense of autonomy and involvement in decision making (e.g., Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer 1990) and more constant, fixed or less modifiable context factors, such as student–teacher ratio (e.g., Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Pattern 1: Aspects of school climate or culture have implications for teachers’ sense of commitment. Within the educational literature, school climate or culture has been measured in terms of teacher work factors as well as by means of more traditional climate instruments. For example, Kushman (1992) and Ma and MacMillan (1999) looked at the school context in terms of teacher work factors. Specifically, Kushman (1992) investigated the components of teachers’ decision-making power and extrinsic rewards. By comparison, Ma and MacMillan (1999) used the term organizational culture to represent a composite of several items indicative of teacher work-related factors. Those items included a positive attitude among the teachers, shared beliefs about learning, and a sense that the community of teachers work effectively to increase student learning. School climate has also been characterized by collegiality (Coladarci, 1992; Riehl & Sipple, 1996), administrative support, teacher influence (Riehl & Sipple, 1996), and the orderliness of the environment (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

The work of Kushman (1992), Ma and MacMillan (1999) and Riehl and Sipple (1996) emphasized a strong relation between the organizational culture and teachers’ sense of commitment. A positive attitude among the teachers, shared beliefs with regard to student learning, and a sense of fairness in that everyone works hard to achieve student learning were similarly associated with higher levels of teachers’ commitment (Ma & MacMillan, 1999).

Two interesting points should be made based on the aforementioned findings. First, while Kushman (1992) investigated the influence of extrinsic rewards on teachers’ commitment, such rewards were not found to be significant. This suggests that teachers’ sense of commitment may be more deeply related to less tangible forces such as shared beliefs and decision making. Second, Ma and MacMillan (1999) found that teachers who felt everyone was working hard in the school demonstrated greater levels of commitment than those who reported otherwise. This response pattern may help us to understand the frustration that Rennae exhibits in the opening vignette. Although she does not state it openly, part of Rennae’s resentment for being “saddled” with the “bad” students may come from an underlying belief that she is expected to do more than other teachers in the school.

Kushman (1992) and Coldarci (1992) employed measures of school climate in lieu of or in addition to work factors. Kushman measured school climate in terms of motivational and behavioral climate and collected data from high school students, teachers, and administrators. Motivational climate assessed whether students were motivated to and interested in learning. Behavioral climate measured whether the school was a safe, orderly place, free of behavioral disruptions to learning. Riehl and Sipple (1996) and Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) also employed measures of school orderliness as conceptualizations of school climate. In contrast, Coldarci (1992) assessed school climate by gathering responses from elementary
school teachers regarding their relationships with their principals and their fellow teachers. Principal climate items focused on the perceived activeness and openness of the principal, as well as an emphasis on instructional issues and shared decision making. Teacher climate items targeted a cooperative team spirit among the faculty, a communal quest for better methods of teaching, and a sense of accountability for student achievement among the teachers.

Similar to findings for work factors, teachers’ sense of commitment was related to school climate factors. Specifically, positive motivational climates (Kushman, 1992) and increased orderliness (Kushman, 1992; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990) were related to higher levels of teacher commitment. In contrast, school climate, as assessed by Coldarci (1992), was unrelated to commitment to teaching. Rather, Coldarci found that teachers’ sense of personal and general teaching efficacy were two of the strongest predictors of commitment. The impact of climate on efficacy was discussed in the previous section. These findings may add to the evidence that teacher efficacy serves as a mediator between climate factors and outcomes such as commitment to teaching.

**Pattern 2: The relationship between teachers and administrators is related to teachers’ feelings of commitment to teaching.** The majority of studies investigating teacher commitment included variables representing principal or administrative characteristics, such as administrative control, shared beliefs (Ma & MacMillan, 1999), principal as school advocate (Coldarci, 1992), administrative support (Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), buffering, and instructional support (Riehl & Sipple, 1996). For example, Ma and MacMillan (1999) examined the construct of administrative control in their research. These researchers defined administrative control in terms of teacher perceptions of shared beliefs with the principal, the amount of administrative duties they were expected to complete, and fair evaluation methods. Furthermore, they determined that teachers who perceived high or positive levels of administrative control also reported higher levels of commitment to teaching.

In addition, Ma and MacMillan (1999) found that a sense of shared beliefs between teachers and administration was related to greater levels of commitment on the part of teachers. In Rennae’s situation, we see several instances in which the administration’s goals or purposes for schooling and her beliefs appeared at odds. This is evidenced in differences with regard to the importance of statewide testing and an emphasis on behavior management rather than on innovative teaching. A potential link to Rennae’s waning commitment was captured in her statement: “This is not what I envisioned when I signed on to become a teacher.”

Coldarci (1992) reported a tendency for greater commitment on the part of teachers who worked with a principal regarded positively in terms of school advocacy and instructional leadership. Furthermore, teachers in this study also reported higher commitment if their administrator main-
Pattern 3: Commitment is related to teachers' sense of autonomy and involvement in decision making. As with teacher efficacy, researchers investigating commitment have also found relevant relations to teachers' sense of autonomy and involvement in decision making. Bacharach and colleagues (1990), Riehl and Sipple (1996), and Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) found significant relations among teachers' sense of autonomy and their sense of commitment. Additionally, Bacharach and colleagues (1990), Hoy and colleagues (1990), and Kushman (1992) found commitment to be related to teacher participation in decision making. Similar to these investigations, Wu and Short (1996) found teachers' sense of empowerment to be related to their feelings of commitment to the organization.

Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) found teachers' sense of autonomy for teaching was the best predictor of their commitment to teaching. Similarly, Bacharach and colleagues (1990) found a negative association between lack of autonomy and teachers' sense of commitment, as well as their job satisfaction.

Riehl and Sipple (1996) examined the relation of autonomy to two forms of commitment, professional and organizational. In that investigation, professional commitment reflected teachers' commitment to the profession of teaching in general. In contrast, organizational commitment was assessed as their commitment to working at a particular school. Organizational commitment was considered in terms of the extent teachers in a given school held a shared mission, the amount of effort put forth (assessed by time spent teaching), and whether teachers would choose to remain at their given school. In that study, higher levels of organizational commitment were related to having increased influence on schoolwide policies, but not to autonomy. In contrast, teachers' sense of professional commitment was positively related to measures of autonomy.

Rennae commented that at Porter she was able to base her curriculum on her students' needs, whereas at Western curricular decisions were bounded by standardized test requirements. Despite the challenges she faced at Porter, Rennae's comments seemed to reflect a greater sense of commitment in that environment than she currently experiences at Western, where she has far less autonomy.

Teachers' participation in decision making was considered in differential degrees by each of the studies presented here. However, this evidence suggests that some form of decision-making participation is related to higher levels of commitment. For example, Hoy and colleagues (1990) found higher commitment in schools where principals acted on teachers' suggestions. That is, in schools where principals' sought and acted on teachers' advice and input, the faculty reported higher levels of commitment. Kushman (1992) found that teachers reported a greater level of commitment when they perceived themselves as having greater amounts of decision-making power (Kushman, 1992). Thus, Kushman's (1992) findings extend those of Hoy and colleagues (1990) by suggesting that actual participation in the decisions, rather than just an opportunity to provide suggestions, is related to higher levels of commitment. How might Rennae's sense of commitment to her school be different had she been given the opportunity to participate in some of the decisions that affected her daily practice?

Pattern 4: Demographic school factors and student characteristics are associated with teacher commitment. School structure factors and student characteristics have also been investigated in terms of their relation to teacher commitment. Specifically, student and community background have been measured in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity (e.g., Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), stability of the student body, and prior student achievement (Kushman, 1992). School size (Kushman, 1992), student-teacher ratio (Coldarci, 1992), and the task environment, including teachers' course load and class schedules (Riehl & Sipple, 1996), have also been associated with teacher commitment.

Interestingly, schools judged to be in greater need were linked to higher levels of reported commitment by teachers (Kushman, 1992). Rennae described feeling needed, appreciated, and trusted when she was working in the urban environment of Porter Middle School. Furthermore, she spoke of working "endless hours" but feeling good. This suggests that the payoff for her effort at Porter, in terms of student learning, contributed to her emotional well-being. Perhaps achieving success in a school where success is hard won and unexpected serves to deepen teachers' sense of commitment to the students and their profession. Additionally, it could be that in these struggling schools, where there is so much room for improvement, teachers feel a sense of urgency that feeds their commitment to student learning.

Kushman (1992) sought to identify teacher, student, and school antecedent variables that would predict teachers' level of organizational commitment and student learning commitment. This study revealed that organizational commitment, internalized goals of the organization, and felt sense of loyalty were predicted by student characteristics, school structure, school climate, and teacher decision making. Furthermore, commitment to student learning was related to teaching experience and student characteristics of race, stability, and perceived need. Finally, teacher ratings of climate accounted for a significant percent (34%) of the variance in commitment scores when school and student background variables were controlled (i.e., SES, stability, and academic achievement). Principal ratings of climate accounted for 14%, and teacher decision making accounted for 13% of the variance. Thus, both demographic factors of the school environment and student characteristics influence teacher commitment.

Coldarci (1992) found a tendency for greater commitment among women and in schools with lower student-teacher ratios. However, salary and years experience were unrelated to commitment. Riehl and Sipple
(1996) looked at specific features of teachers' task environment, considering the number of class preparations, number of total students, class schedule, and the achievement level of students taught. They found that higher commitment was associated with teaching students with higher achievement levels on average. Furthermore, liking one's class schedule was associated with greater commitment to the goals or mission of the school context. This suggests that specific contextual practices may have differential effects on unique components of commitment.

**FINAL THOUGHTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

From the research we reviewed, one can conclude that contextual influences do relate to the degree and form of teachers’ motivation. Specifically, school climate and teacher decision making are related to organizational commitment (Kushman, 1992). Teacher control, student ability, and school organization are associated with teacher efficacy (Lee et al., 1991). Furthermore, we have seen that stress on the mastery of content over performance within the learning environment is tied to increases in teacher efficacy (Midgely et al., 1995).

Embedded in these findings is the underlying premise that teacher efficacy and teacher commitment are related to other positive educational outcomes and, as such, should be fostered and developed. This review of the literature suggests certain key and tangible factors within the educational context that may be manipulated in order to enhance teacher motivation. Furthermore, this body of research, and Rennae's reflection on her own motivations, emphasized that efficacy and commitment may have different contextual influences. Specifically, commitment related significantly to both teacher characteristics (Coldarci, 1992; Ma & MacMillan, 1999) and contextual characteristics (Coldarci, 1992; Kushman, 1992; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), whereas the primary influence on teacher efficacy seemed to be contextual factors alone (e.g., Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990).

Moreover, a highly efficacious teacher like Rennae may begin to lose her sense of commitment to teaching as the result of a variety of context-related factors. This combination of high efficacy and declining commitment we see in Rennae may help us understand the fear of burnout she voices. These differential feelings expressed in this review, as well as in the research findings described, highlight the need to look at teachers' motivations from multiple vantage points. As demonstrated in this chapter, the dual focus on teachers' very specific task-related efficacy beliefs and their broader commitment to student learning and their profession afford a unique vista on teachers and teaching.

**Next Steps for Inquiry**

In light of the differential patterns reported for teacher efficacy and teacher commitment, the distinct precursors to each of these beliefs should be investigated. Investigation into the nature of the antecedents for teacher efficacy and commitment can inform school organizations and teacher educators on the means by which positive efficacy and commitment can be developed, enhanced, and maintained. Additionally, the interrelationships between context, efficacy, and commitment should be explored. Coldarci (1992) found efficacy to be the strongest predictor of commitment, and contextual factors as significant predictors of efficacy. Therefore, the potential path from context to efficacy to commitment warrants exploration. In this hypothesized model, efficacy may prove to be the process through which one develops a sense of commitment to a school and to the field of education.

Related to the latter issue, we noted that much of the relevant research we identified in this review was of a correlational nature. This suggests that more direct empirical tests of the relation between teacher motivations and the educational context are needed. At best, we were able to identify emergent patterns within the existing literature. However, those emergent patterns can only hint at the true nature of these critical constructs and cannot begin to establish causality. Moreover, while we focused on empirical, quantitative studies in this exploration, we acknowledge that rich qualitative investigations may illuminate the bonds between teachers' motivations and the educational context that cannot be captured solely through quantitative research.

Finally, investigations of processes by which teachers become socialized into the school environment and enculturated into the profession are desirable. The research presented in this chapter looked at slices of the teaching experience but did not address the development of teacher efficacy, commitment, or the construction of positive school climates. How teachers come to feel committed and part of a positive collaborative school culture need to be researched. Qualitative research and longitudinal studies may be particularly valuable in portraying the character of socialization and enculturation processes.

**Next Steps for Instruction**

While we recognize the exploratory nature of this review, we feel that tentative recommendations for educational practices can be offered based on the emergent patterns. Those emergent patterns suggest the importance of collaboration among teachers, shared beliefs throughout the school, a
focus on academics, shared decision making, and an overall sense of community. One factor that we believe underlies those intangibles is communication. Communication between and among teachers, administrators, and policymakers, as educational stakeholders, is necessary to achieve these desirable outcomes. Additionally, the practices and decisions of administrators exert great influence on the educational and social aspects of the school. Here we forward two broad educational guidelines dealing with communication and administrative support followed by specific steps teachers can take to realize those outcomes.

- Teachers should work together to open and maintain lines of communication.
  - Teachers should recognize their power to improve collaboration with and among their colleagues by seeking out others, engaging in professional discussions about student learning, and offering assistance and support when appropriate (Chester & Beaudin, 1996).
  - Teachers should strive to maintain a strong focus on academics for their students and in their interactions with colleagues and other educational stakeholders. They should be vigilant in projecting a learning focus in their instruction and other professional communications. For example, teachers should stress the intrinsic value of the educational content and the pleasure of knowing during instruction over the completion of external mandates (Alexander, 1997).
  - A positive community, like any relationship, needs to be nurtured by its members in order for it to be sustained. Thus, teachers should be active and positive members of the school community. They should work to share their successes and highlight the positive aspects of their school in conversations with others.

- Administrators should provide leadership and support for teachers with regard to creating a positive school environment.
  - Administrators should support collaboration among their teachers. This support needs to be conveyed in verbal encouragement and evidenced in tangible actions such as providing time for collaboration. Teachers often take their cues from the administration (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). If collaboration is seen as a valued activity by the school administration, teachers may be more likely to collaborate.
  - Administrators should provide opportunities for teachers to feel a sense of autonomy and control in the school environment. One method for achieving this objective is by including teachers in decision making. By involving teachers meaningfully in decision making, administrators should contribute to teachers’ perception of such actions may foster a greater sense of community by allowing school members to have power over their own experiences (Firestone & Bader, 1992).
  - Shared beliefs provide a foundation for community and success in a school. In order for beliefs to be shared, they must first be voiced. Thus, administrators should make a concerted effort to share their educational and pedagogical beliefs with their faculty and other invested parties. Furthermore, because teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers are more successful when their beliefs are aligned with one another (Ma & MacMillan, 1999), efforts to achieve consensus on key issues are worthwhile (Senge, 1990).

REFERENCES


