

THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL AND SCHOOL MINDFULNESS
ON THE ACADEMIC OPTIMISM IN SCHOOLS
IN NORTH ALABAMA

by

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism in schools in North Alabama. Academic optimism is a construct made of up the tenets of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. Mindfulness, individual and organizational, joins academic optimism to create meaningful leadership strategies that can be used develop more effective school. It was hypothesized in the study that the greater degree of a school's individual and organizational mindfulness, the greater the degree of academic optimism. Additionally, it was hypothesized that the variable of socio-economic status (SES) of the school would have a significant impact on mindfulness and academic optimism of the school. This study examined three school systems located in Northern Alabama with a total of 577 elementary, middle, and high school teachers in 39 schools. Two survey instruments and the SES of each school were used to address these inquiries. Mindfulness was measured using the School Mindfulness Scale (Hoy & Gage, 2003) and academic optimism was measured using the School Academic Optimism Survey (Hoy, 2005). As predicted, the hypotheses addressing mindfulness and academic optimism were supported by the outcomes from this study which demonstrated that the greater the degree of a school's (organizational) mindfulness, the greater the degree of the school's academic optimism. Significantly, results for socio-economic status (SES) showed that influence of socio-economic status was minimal. The study confirmed much of the literature in regard to the relationships of organizational mindfulness, which is, but not limited to practicing an open, creative, multi-perspective state of being, academic optimism, and SES.

DEDICATION

This educational endeavor is dedicated to my supportive, optimistic, and beautiful family; cousins, nieces and nephews included. If my four resourceful, creative, and truly loving children, Hughston, Joshua, Joseph and Annabelle had not asked me one day if I ever finished my doctorate, I would not be writing this now. They are my heart. My love of learning and desire to be a part of the educational world as my vocation, I owe to my lovely, talented, and motivating mother, Dr. Joan Gates Dowdle, and my extremely bright, analytical, and handsome father, Dr. Joseph Clyde Dowdle. My two sassy lawyer sisters, Jeanne Dowdle Rasco and Jan Dowdle Thornton, add a sense of healthy competition that has kept me going in the most trying of times. My love and thanks goes to my “sista” wives, Shannon, Allison, Rhonda and Jessica, for being my sweet babies’ second mothers. I thank my children’s second grandmother, my neighbor, and friend, Joan Guice, for keeping a watchful and loving eye on us all. Finally, this scholastic undertaking, I dedicate to my husband Bill, for without him, I wouldn’t be the person I am becoming today. I am stronger, wiser, kinder, much more appreciative and extremely mindful of all of my relationships and with all of my endeavors. Dr. Ellen Langer’s quote summarizes my belief that,

life consists only of moments, nothing more than that. So if you make the moment matter, it all matters. You can be mindful, you can mindless. You can win, you can lose. The worst case is to be mindless and lose. So when you are doing anything, be mindful, notice new things, make meaningful to you, and you’ll prosper. (Leicht, 2014, CBS Interview)

To end this writing without including the bible verse which has carried me through this season of my life, would be remiss: For I can do ALL things through Christ which strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

β Beta

α Cronbach's index of internal consistency

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF CHARTS	xiii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview.....	1
Background of Study.....	2
Need and Purpose	3
Definition of Terms	5
Statement of Research Problem	6
Research Questions	7
Scope and Limitations	7
Summary.....	8
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	9
Introduction.....	9
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Mindlessness	9

Mindfulness.....	14
Organizational Mindfulness.....	21
Academic Optimism.....	26
Collective Efficacy.....	31
Trust.....	36
Academic Emphasis.....	42
Theoretical Rationale.....	43
Summary.....	45
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS.....	46
Introduction.....	46
Sample.....	46
Research Design.....	47
Instrumentation.....	48
Data Collection.....	50
Statistical Analysis.....	51
Summary.....	52
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	54
Introduction.....	54
Descriptive Statistics.....	55
Additional Information.....	58
Measures.....	61
Reliability.....	61
Correlations.....	62

Hypotheses Testing	64
Summary	67
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	68
Summary of Findings	68
Theoretical Implications	70
Additional Information	77
Practical Implications	78
Recommendation for Future Research	81
Conclusion	83
REFERENCES.....	85
APPENDICES.....	92

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Percentages of the Age and Gender of Survey Participants	57
Table 2 Percentage of the Highest Level of Education Completed by Survey	57
Table 3 Total Distribution of Academic Optimism Scores	59
Table 4 Total Distribution of Mindfulness Scores.....	60
Table 5 Descriptive Characteristics of Measures	61
Table 6 Correlation of all Variables Examined on the Study	62
Table 7 Regression Coefficient of Academic Optimism on Mindfulness, Individual Mindfulness, and SES	63
Table 8 Regression Coefficient of Organizational Mindfulness on Collective Efficacy, Faculty Trust, and Academic Optimism	65
Table 9 Regression Coefficient of Individual Mindfulness on Collective Efficacy, Faculty Trust, and Academic Optimism	66

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Academic Optimism.....	28
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LIST OF CHARTS

Chart 1 Percentage of the Grade Level Taught at the Current School by Survey Participant.....	56
Chart 2 Percentage of Years Taught at the Current School by Survey Participants	58
Chart 3 Comparison of the participants at the Average to Below Average Academically Optimistic Schools and the Very Above Average Academically Optimistic Schools.....	59

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

As the focus on school leadership becomes more prevalent, there is increased pressure for administrators to provide assurance that graduates from high schools, including those in Alabama are adequately prepared for college and career opportunities. Principals have escalating responsibilities to ensure that their students, faculties, and schools are progressing on the correct path to success. To accomplish this task, administrators must develop effective leadership practices that will consistently support student learning in schools. In 2004, through the Learning from Leadership Project, Leithwood and associates conducted an international review of research findings that specifically focused on how leadership influences student learning. Their research discoveries strongly suggest that successful leadership may play a highly significant and frequently underestimated role in improving student learning. Evidence indicates effective leadership on student learning is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related causes that contribute to what students learn at school. Also, leadership influences are usually most significant where they are needed the most, thus, the greater the challenge, and the grander the impact of their actions with student learning (p. 5). With the understanding and knowledge that school leadership is instrumental to the success or failure of student learning, the need for additional research on effective leadership practices is warranted. This investigation examined academic optimism in regards to mindfulness in the school setting and purposely exposed connections of individual mindfulness of the school leader with academic optimism. Any

information regarding individual and organizational mindfulness was specifically monitored as these powerful constructs continue to be widely researched with great significance (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). In this chapter, the background for the study is provided, the need and purpose for this research is presented, and key concepts are defined. In addition, there is discussion of the research problem that included the research questions and possible limitations to the overall research study.

Background of Study

Over the past decade, the constructs, mindfulness popularized by Langer (Langer, 1989; Langer, 1993; Langer, 1997; Langer, 2009; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000) and academic optimism explored by Hoy and his associates (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006) continue to gain positive momentum as each independently and collectively impact the educational field. *Mindfulness* is the capability to see any situation from several perspectives using a creative, open, and probabilistic state of mind (Langer, 1993). Mindfulness has continued to expand beyond the limits of the individual as it has moved to an organizational practice as exhibited among highly reliable organizations (HROs) to include effective schools (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, 2007, 2015). A culture of *academic optimism* is formed in an educational setting with the deliberate combination of collective efficacy, shared collective trust, and strong academic emphasis (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). The need for effective leadership practices, such as mindfulness and academic optimism, will continue to increase as educational demands are amplified for school systems working to meet national and state standards for consistent student and school progress. With every research endeavor that shares information about these powerful paradigms, queries are raised about the need for additional

future research development involving these practices working together in unity. Sims (2010) research on school mindfulness in relationship to academic optimism examined 67 schools and 468 kindergarten to 6th grade teachers. He claimed his study of mindfulness and academic optimism was the only research endeavor comparing the two constructs and, accordingly, further research was warranted. When Gage (2004) investigated the construct of mindfulness in 75 middle schools, he concluded his dissertation analyzing school mindfulness with a challenge to explore and refine mindfulness specifically in regards to how administrators could use the notion of mindfulness to improve practice. Additionally, Ivey's (2012) qualitative study which explored the perceived effectiveness and application of mindfulness practices in education concluded with a need for additional research linking the two constructs, mindfulness and optimism, to understand the full impact of mindfulness on students and teachers.

Need and Purpose

With the Alabama State Department of Education's newly implemented PLAN 2020 (2014) calling for every child to graduate from high school and be prepared for college, work and adulthood in the 21st century change needs to take place in some Alabama schools. One key component addressed in this plan is every school being led by a well-prepared, resourced, supported, and effective leader (Alabama State Department of Education, 2014). By doing so, a Plan 2020 leader should excel in meeting the demands of this initiative by implementing effectively assessments, providing teacher and student support systems, and improving the overall student achievement by assisting in providing rigorous and relevant learning environments. The findings from this research on mindfulness and academic optimism, I hope, will assist school leaders with possible solutions in achieving this goal for school leadership.

Mindfulness, individual and organizational, and academic optimism are constructs researchers have connected to meaningful leadership in educational settings (Hoy, 2003; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006; Kearney, Kelsey, & Herrington, 2013). Each practice has its separate impact on school leaders regarding instructional practices in schools and individual students' academic achievement. Principal leadership provides a solid foundation for both teacher leadership and higher quality instruction for students (Hattie, 2015; Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 37). Individual mindfulness, actively initiated by the school leader, can develop and strengthen organizational mindfulness, minimizing mindlessness. Mindlessness relies on old categories, automatic behavior, and continuing to respond from a single perspective (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006). Academic optimism encompasses three concepts: trust, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis work together and independently to impact school processes. Additional information gleaned from this study shows the impact of mindfulness on all educators in daily interactions in their work and personal life to bring real change in day-to-day interactions with colleagues, parents, and students. Once a person generates a possible way of doing something (optimistic), even if it is a low-probability way, the perception of a solution being possible increases (Langer, 1997). With the significant impact of both constructs in schools, there is a need for additional studies that investigate the connections of these constructs with each other as well as their relationship with school leadership, and this study sought to do just that.

Definition of Terms

Academic optimism

The academic optimism of a school is the collective belief of teachers that the faculty can teach, their students can learn, and parents are supporters; thus, teachers set high academic goals and press hard for achievement (Hoy, 2010; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006).

Academic emphasis

Academic emphasis is the extent in which a school is driven by a quest for academic excellence, the press for academic achievement (Hoy, 2010; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006).

Collective efficacy

Collective efficacy is the judgment of teachers that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the actions required to have positive effects on all students (Hoy, 2010; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006).

Mindfulness

“Mindful schools have teachers and administrators who develop the ability to anticipate surprise by focusing on failure, avoiding simplification, and remaining sensitive to operations” (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006, p. 240). It is an open, creative, probabilistic state of mind in which the individual might be led to finding differences among things thought to be similar and similarities among things thought to be different (Langer, 1989).

Mindlessness

Teachers and administrators simply follow rules or comply with senseless orders (Hoy et al., 2006). Mindlessness is automatic behavior and acting from one single perspective; relying rigidly on categories and distinctions created in the past (Langer, 1989).

Organizational Mindfulness

Organizational mindfulness is the practice of an organization to cultivate a state of mindfulness by maintaining a preoccupation with mistakes, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to authority (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, p. 42).

Trust

Trust is one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is open, honest, reliable, competent, and benevolent (Hoy, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Statement of Research Problem

The intention of this quantitative study was to measure and identify the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism in the school setting. Both individual and organizational mindfulness in conjunction with academic optimism was examined. This research is anticipated to help solidify the importance of individual (principal) and organizational (school) mindfulness in increasing the academic optimism in a school. In every facet studied, the presence of mindfulness becomes even more relevant when the concept of mindlessness is routinely practiced in all organizations, especially schools. The consequences of mindlessness may range from minuscule to catastrophic with examples such as maintaining a narrow self-image, unintended cruelty, loss of control, learned helplessness, and stunted potential (Langer, 1989). In addition, the researcher hoped to find this combination of variables had a positive impact on viable school effectiveness. This study built upon Langer's work on individual mindfulness (Langer, 1989; Langer, 1993; Langer, 1997; Langer, 2009), Weick and Sutcliffe's study of organizational mindfulness with highly reliable organizations (HROs) (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007), and Hoy and his colleagues' work with both of these constructs plus

academic optimism (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006) in the educational setting. This research, therefore, theorized that the practice of mindfulness, individual and organizational, would have a positive impact on the academic optimism of a school especially in relationship to school leadership.

Research Questions

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism. Mindfulness was both investigated within an organization and individually in regard to academic optimism. The research questions guiding this study were:

What is the relationship between school (organizational) mindfulness and the academic optimism of the school?

What is the relationship between principal (individual) mindfulness and academic optimism of the school?

What is the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) of the school on the mindfulness and academic optimism of the school?

Scope and Limitations

There were some issues of scope and limitations when conducting this study. The study used an on-hand sample rather than a random sample. This study was also limited by the number of participants in the three selected school systems in Alabama State Board of Education District 8 in North Alabama. There were 39 schools that participated in this study. The initial search for participants involved invitations to seven school systems that included a total of 124 schools. There were determined attempts to include a diverse collection of schools and teachers regarding

demographic backgrounds. Further discussion of the sample is in chapter four. This study presumed a majority of the faculty of each school would voluntarily participate in the cross-sectional survey. It was assumed the respondents would be reasonably honest when responding to survey questions to help establish valid and reliable information. At the completion of this study, all school systems will receive information from the complete findings from the study, but will not receive individual school information.

Summary

Effective leaders remember that schools are about teaching and learning; all other activities are secondary to these basic goals (Hoy & Woolfolk- Hoy, 2009, p. 1). Educators know schools can become places where teachers and principals continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire, where emergent patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is liberated, and where people are constantly learning how to learn (Hoy & Woolfolk- Hoy, 2009, p. 344). This research showed that the theory in which the constructs of mindfulness, individual and organizational, and academic optimism, which encompasses the concepts of trust, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the school leader and the overall educational organization.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents the research history and developments of mindfulness and academic optimism in relationship to the school organization. Mindfulness will be discussed in regards to mindlessness, individual mindfulness, and organizational mindfulness. Academic optimism will be delineated with the interwoven explanation of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. The theoretical conversation weaving of mindfulness and academic optimism in regards to the school organization will support the identification of the research questions used to test this theory of study.

Conceptual Framework

Mindlessness

Mindlessness has made its way into almost every aspect of our daily lives. More times than not, drivers would have to admit that when they arrive at their destination, they have no memory of how they got to that location. It is a routine, and no thinking is needed. A mindlessness story, told in popular terms, from Langer (1989, p. 43) is illustrative:

One day a woman was about to cook a roast. Before putting the roast in the pot, she cut off a small slice. When asked why she did this, she paused, became a little embarrassed, and said she did it because her mother had always done the same thing when she cooked a roast. With her curiosity aroused, she telephoned her mother to ask why she always cut

off a little slice before cooking her roast. Her mother's answer was the same: "Because that's the way my mother did it." Finally, in need of a more helpful answer, she asked her grandmother why she always cut off a little slice before cooking the roast. Without hesitating, her grandmother replied: "Because that's the only way it would fit in my pot."

This illustration exemplifies mindlessness by demonstrating that the routine of daily life is not noticed unless a problem occurs or someone brings it to light. When teachers and administrators simply follow rules or comply with senseless orders, they are mindless. In a school setting, mindlessness is often seen with test preparation, discipline actions, and seemingly simple acts as lunchroom procedures. Langer (1989) stated that there are various causes of mindlessness; some include repetition, premature cognitive commitment, belief in limited resources, education for outcome, and influence of context (p. 41); several of these items listed will be discussed further in this literature review. Mindlessness grows out of routine and general comfort that things are being done "correctly," that is, according to standard procedures. The single-minded pursuit of outcomes typically promotes mindlessness in contrary to an emphasis on process (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 238) creating a human frustration with unresponsive structures, rigid rules, and mindless policies (Hoy, 2002, p. 87).

In education, Langer (1997) cited seven myths or mindsets that promote mindlessness and undermine the process of learning. They are: (1) the basics must be learned so well that they become second nature, (2) paying attention means staying focused on one thing at a time, (3) delaying gratification is important, (4) rote memorization is necessary in education, (5) forgetting is a problem, (6) intelligence is knowing "what's out there", and (6) there are right and wrong answers (p. 2). Langer argued that these myths undermine true learning, stifle our creativity, silence our questions and diminish our self-esteem. She claimed that children (students) are

positively affected by mindful interactions with adults, and negatively affected by mindless interactions with them (Langer, 2012). Qualitative research by Langer, Cohen, and Djikic (2012) that examined 54 children at a baseball camp demonstrated that children ages 9-12 devalued themselves following mindless interactions with adults. Implications reported were that mindless interactions could result in children experiencing self-blame, low motivation to learn, and lower self-esteem. Their work demonstrated children are more attracted to mindful adults (p. 1121). The causes of mindlessness that influence daily behavior are repetitive, narrow mindsets, preoccupation with ends rather than means (outcome only), and context confusion (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 238). Context confusion is when people confuse the circumstances controlling the behavior of another person with the situation determining their own behavior (Langer, 1989). People assume other people's objectives are the same as their own, even though they might be totally different.

In the United States educational system, where standardized testing and results drive the typical academic environment, Langer (1989) argued that the style of education that concentrates on outcomes encourages mindlessness. If something is presented as truth, alternative answers are not considered, and this single-minded way of viewing the world can drive everything one does. Langer stated serious effects of mindlessness are self-induced dependence. Self-induced dependence falls in the same category with single-minded image and leads people to become whatever label they have been given. Mindlessness also can create events of unintended cruelty demonstrated with compartmentalizing uncomfortable thoughts or categorizing individuals. Langer's (1989) example is that when most of us grow up and spend our time with people like ourselves, we tend to assume commonalities. In turn, when confronted with someone different, instead of looking for ways we are alike, we look for ways we are different (p. 156).

Langer (1989) stated there are three types of mindlessness. The first is entrapment by category or labels. Mindlessness sets in when we rely rigidly on categories and distinctions created in the past (p. 11). Mindlessness does not allow for new information and various points of view to be considered. One example of mindless thinking shifting to mindful thought is seen in educational offerings in the past several decades for special education students who are mainstreamed into regular education classes. In hopes of breaking down barriers, prejudice, or misconceptions created from this type of mindlessness, a child using a wheelchair or one who is hearing impaired will experience the same educational opportunities as students with no known disability.

The second kind of mindlessness is automatic behavior. People deal with the same situations and problems day after day. To deal with the routine, people develop strong convictions about what the common response should be and in turn react with automatic behaviors (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 89). Whether deemed good or bad, personal habits or continuous repetition of an activity may fall into the category of mindlessness. In school, this is often seen with discipline practices. Students misbehave, and the school leader gives the same response to all the students without investigating beyond the obvious reasons for the act. The administrator purposely deals with all situations identically. An example would be one student who is continually late to class because he has a longer distance to travel compared to a student who is late to class because of deliberately playing around in the hall. Both students are late so the administrator gives identical punishment without considering reasons. This mindless act can have many repercussions, for example: the student missing instructional time for being suspended for an action that did not warrant this type of automatic response: angry parents

because the child was not treated fairly; and even teachers deciding not to support the administrator because poor judgment was used.

The third type of mindlessness is acting from one single perspective. The mindless individual is committed to one predetermined use of the information, and other possible uses or applications are not explored (Langer, 1989, p. 22). This leads to premature cognitive commitment, which is the rigid belief that results from the mindless acceptance of information as being true without any consideration of alternative versions of the information. Individuals get locked into one predetermined version of information, even though other versions may better meet the needs of the situation (Langer, 1993, p. 45). Simply, we mindlessly accept labels as fixed truths (Langer, 2009, p. 131), a firm mindset. Mindlessness of this sort can be seen as the plot stimulus to many theatrical stories, such as Bernard Shaw's 1913 play, *Pygmalion*. In this story, Eliza Doolittle changed from being viewed as an uneducated flower girl to being regarded very favorably in society. Another more recent event is the 1983 movie, *Trading Places* which starred Eddie Murphy and Dan Aykroyd. In this movie, the outlook surrounding both characters shifted as the perceptions of others became more mindful. Humans do not realize how mindless our interactions with the world and each other may become with time. It is common not to question debatable information when it presents itself because it fits some established belief or ingrained form of behavior (Langer, 2009, p. 26). Examples of mindlessness in a school setting are easy to find. Administrators and teachers follow the preset routines established at the start of the year and follow this procedure each and every day. Langer argues our mindlessness may be costly and an increase in mindfulness results in an increase in competence, health and longevity, happiness, creativity, charisma, and makes us more satisfied with our work (Langer, 2005, p. 12).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a process of actively making new distinctions about objects in one's awareness, a process that cultivates sensitivity to subtle variations in context and perspectives about the observed subject, rather than relying on entrenched categorizations from the past (Langer et al., 2012, p. 1115). Mindfulness refers to a frame of mind in which an individual maintains continuous attention to detail. It is endless scrutiny and refinement of expectations based on new experiences, appreciation of the subtleties of context, and identification of novel aspects of context that can improve foresight and functioning (Hoy, 2002). Kearney, Kelsey and Herrington's (2013) mixed-method study analyzed principal mindfulness in 149 highly effective elementary, middle and high schools resulting in evidence that showed a principal's mindfulness matters (p. 331). These researchers noted in their study that principals did not begin as mindful leaders. They became more mindful as leaders by listening to experienced and expert teachers, by modeling experimentation, reflection and re-centering on effective practices, by being patient and taking risks, and by always looking for ways to break down barriers to learning and unlocking doors to greater success (p. 333). The research outcomes showed mindfulness can be learned and strengthened, creating enormous possibilities for future educational leaders that strive to achieve school improvement. These researchers stated the Mindfulness Scale (M-scale) should be validated as a concise and reliable measurement for principal mindfulness (Kearney, Kelsey & Herrington, 2013). The M-scale is an assessment that measures the degree to which the school is a mindful organization (Gage & Hoy, 2003).

Research conducted by Langer (Langer, 1989; 1993; 1997; 2009) directly addresses the power of mindfulness in areas that include various leadership aspects, health, personal growth, and human life longevity. These studies have both direct and indirect connections with the study

of mindfulness with academic optimism. Langer's research (1989) solidifies the importance of practiced mindfulness in daily living in that helps to increase productivity, reduce stress, and extend life expectancy plus many more benefits for humans. The more mindful we are as individuals, the more choices we have and the less reactive we become (p. 19). In her first book, *Mindfulness*, Langer offered a review of a 15-year period of many mindfulness studies. To see the simplicity of mindfulness, one of her research endeavors shows the impact of being mindful versus mindless:

One day, elderly residents were each given a choice of houseplants to take care of and were asked to make a small number of decisions about their daily routines. A year and a half later, not only were these people more cheerful, active and alert than a similar group in the same institution who were not given these choices and responsibilities, but many more of them were alive. In fact, less than half as many of the decision-making, plant-minding residents had died as had those in the other group (Langer, 1989, p. 1).

Langer uses experiments as simple as these to show the dramatic impact that mindfulness has on the health and well-being of individuals. One must take note that many of Langer's experiments indeed are simple. She does not consistently use a control group with precision; as Langer is not a quantitative researcher, the majority of her studies are qualitative. Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which people are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things, and sensitive to context; rules and routines may guide our behavior rather than predetermine it. When people are mindless, their behavior is the rule and routine controlled; they are stuck in a single rigid perspective, and they are oblivious to alternative ways of knowing (Langer, 2000). In contrast, the "feel" of mindfulness is that of a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being present. This subjective state is the essential common thread that ties together extremely

diverse observable consequences for the viewer. When one is actively drawing distinctions, the whole individual is involved (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2). In addition, Hoy and Sweetland's (2001) work investigating two empirical studies involving a total of 177 teachers representing 119 schools focused on enabling school structures. Their research identified individual mindfulness, whether naturally occurring or deliberately developed, may help a principal be more effective in developing skills to successfully lead a school. They stated that mindful management, to include openness to new information, considering alternate perspectives, and viewing problems as opportunities to improve, increases the likelihood of success for the principal and the entire school.

Langer stated that mindfulness process of drawing novel distinctions can lead to three diverse effects, (a) the creation of new categories, (b) openness to new information, and (c) awareness of more than one perspective (Langer, 1989, p. 62). The first attribute of a mindful state is creating new categories, which is making new groupings in a mindful way by people genuinely paying attention to a situation and the surrounding context. Langer (1989) stated fatigue, conflict, and burnout may all result from being stalled in old categories, trapped by old mindsets. In the work place, such as in a school, creating new categories, exploring diverse perspectives, and focusing on process all increase the possibility that a new approach to a problem will be found. Mindfulness may increase flexibility, productivity, innovation, satisfaction, and leadership ability (p. 133). If a leader can risk deviation from the routine way of doing things, creative employees can thrive and contribute, at times making things better for a much more productive outcome. In everyday language, *new energy* in a new context is known to most people as a "second wind" (p. 136). Openness to new information, the second trait, is demonstrated when a person actively attends to changed signals. Behavior generated from

mindful listening or watching, from expanding, increasingly differentiated information base is likely to be more effective (Langer, 1989, p. 67). Openness is more than just new information; it includes different points of view. The third mindful characteristic is awareness of more than one perspective. Once one becomes mindfully aware of others' viewpoints, then one realizes that there are as many different views as there are people in this world (Langer, 1989, p. 68). Significantly, in regards to leaders, Langer argued that in trying to look at things from multiple perspectives while maintaining an open-minded attitude toward their own behavior, change becomes more possible.

In addition Langer, Cohen and Djikic (2012) study argued that children who interacted with the mindful adults were in a better mood and felt better about themselves. These children also had more positive feelings about the mindful adults. Being mindful with children requires actively making new and subtle distinctions about them, noticing subtle idiosyncrasies, being sensitive to her uniqueness and changes through time (p.1115). Children know whether their teachers or parents are on automatic pilot when responding to them. Langer, Cohen and Djikic (2012) stated:

There is no reason to believe that adults' mind states are not being detected by children. Given the importance of adult role models in children's development, children may be highly sensitized and affected by the mind states of adults with whom they interact. One can reasonably suggest that the qualities of attention that are suggested here as fundamental characteristics of mindfulness could potentially have a strong effect on children if perceived by them. (p.1115)

While Langer's research regarding mindfulness' direct impact on children, specifically in education, would be beneficial to consider for further study, such research is beyond

the goals of this proposed research.

Ivey's dissertation research on mindfulness in education led to another caveat. Mindfulness was addressed as a program more than a concept. She examined specific mindfulness programs (packaged) that are implemented in schools to help principals, teachers and staff implement mindfulness practices amongst themselves and with their students. Mindfulness programs designed for children are being used in educational settings with positive results (Flook et al., 2010, p. 71). Contradictory of the mindfulness research conducted by Hoy and replicated by many others, Ivey's research (2001) concluded mindfulness is an unconventional approach to use in schools (p. 73). Ivey's research labeling mindfulness as a "program" that is limited to financial resources, selected implementation models, and overall acceptance by school staff is not in agreement with Langer's mindfulness construct because Langer sees mindfulness as an everyday part of life. Recently in an interview, Langer stated:

Life consists only of moments, nothing more than that. So if you make the moment matter, it all matters. You can be mindful; you can be mindless. You can win; you can lose. The worst case is to be mindless and lose. So when you are doing anything, be mindful, notice new things, make it meaningful to you, and you'll prosper (Leicht, 2014, CBS Interview).

As Langer demonstrated in this example, mindfulness is available to each individual regardless of programmatic conditions.

Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which people are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context, where rules and routines may guide our behavior rather than predetermine it. When people are mindless, they are stuck in a single rigid perspective, and they are typically oblivious to alternative ways of knowing (Langer, 2000).

Mindfulness is the capacity to see any situation or environment from several perspectives (Langer, 1993). When one is mindful, rules, goals, and routines guide; they don't govern (Langer, 2014). Langer clearly stated practicing mindfulness is not always easy. The practice of being alert to everything, preparing to act if a change needs to occur, and staying ever ready -- can take effort and persistence. The positive side of being mindful far outweighs being mindless especially when it comes to school leadership.

Langer (1989) specifically stated that being mindful of *mindfulness* is critical when striving for success in organizations as well as personal lives. But people need to be watchful; certainty tends to develop with continued success. There is a tendency to continue doing whatever has worked, ironically making successful businesses vulnerable to petrified mindsets (p. 152). Mindful people, including effective leaders, tend to notice problems before they become extremely serious; they see the early signs of change as warnings, and these types of negatives are seen as opportunities (Langer, 1989, p. 134). When teachers and administrators simply follow rules or comply with senseless orders, they are mindless; they turn mindful as they substitute their personal judgment for routine responses. Mindfulness requires flexibility, vigilance, openness, and the ability to discontinue when necessary (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 238). Hoy, Gage and Tarter's research (2006) on school mindfulness in relationship to faculty trust examined 75 middle schools and 2,600 teachers. The research conclusion was that mindful schools develop open and trusting relationships between administrators and teachers. Both faculty and principal mindfulness are important but leader mindfulness is critical. Principals need to lead in mindful ways by encouraging faculty members to play with ideas, to create novelty in their classrooms to feel safe to take reasonable risks, to experiment, and to be resilient (p. 253). Creating this type of school culture allows for focus on failure, which is a change from common

practice. Educators who implement novel ideas with a fresh perspective, who can take old ways of doing things, make them fresh, and challenge others to do the same, will achieve higher levels of mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 254). Mindful schools have mindful teachers and administrators who develop the ability to anticipate surprise by focusing on failure, avoiding simplification, and remaining sensitive to operations. When the unexpected happens, the organization rebounds with persistence, resilience, and expertise (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 240). Overall, individual mindfulness is a habit of mind that continuously seeks disconfirming evidence to test assumptions. Mindful administrators know that “believing is seeing,” and they are on guard-wary of the obvious and searching for the “danger not yet risen” (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 239). Research by Blasé and Blasé (2006) which studied teacher’s perspectives on effective instructional leadership involving a total of 809 elementary, middle and high school full-time public teachers from across the United States found that effective principals engage in thoughtful dialogue with teachers. The teacher’s feedback focuses on observed classroom behavior, is specific, provides praise, expresses caring and interest, responds to concerns about students, establishes problem-solving orientation, and stresses the principal’s availability for follow-up talk. The effects of this feedback included increased teacher reflection, innovation, creativity, instructional variety, risk taking, better planning for instruction, and improved motivation, efficacy, sense of security, and self-esteem (p. 133). This practice is a characteristic of mindfulness.

An aspect of mindfulness Langer (2005) presented that has great benefits to educational leaders, teachers and most people is that the state of mindfulness is visible (p. 25). She has demonstrated when people are coached into being more mindful in a situation, they are found more genuine and charismatic. When people are mindfully engaged with any aspect of their

being, it is the most natural, creative state. Hattie (2015) argued in his research synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement regarding high- impact instructional leadership, that effective school leaders maintain a mind-frame that directly affects student outcomes. An example, which mimics mindfulness, is the practice of school leaders welcoming errors and creating an environment in which teachers and students may learn from mistakes without losing face (p. 38). School leaders can experience perpetual renewal when experiencing mindfulness. Perpetual renewal is the willingness to learn from mistakes and try new things when trying to strengthen student learning which in turn enhance the educational experience for all stakeholders (Kearney, Kelsey, & Herington, 2013). Mindfulness is a paradox of sorts: It sees problems as opportunities and views successes as problematic; it is both optimistic and skeptical (Hoy, 2003, p. 97).

Organizational Mindfulness

Weick and Sutcliffe (2001, 2007, 2015) developed the concept of organizational mindfulness when they began examining highly reliable organizations (HROs) in conjunction with collective mindful practices. The concept of collective mind explains organizational performance in situations requiring dependability and reliability with the understanding that as mindful comprehension increases, organizational errors decrease (Weick & Roberts, 1993). This is an increasing necessity in the daily operations practiced by school leaders for educational organizations to remain safe, effective, and viable agents for student learning.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) specified that people who act mindfully notice and pursue the rich, neglected remainder of information that less mindful people leave unnoticed and untouched. Mindful individuals hold complex projects together because they understand what is happening

(p. 160). The big difference between functioning in HROs and other organizations is often most evident in the early stages when the unexpected occurs; typical organizations give off only weak signals of trouble. Mindful organizations uphold the capability to see the significance of the event and this allows the HROs to respond vigorously (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 18). Mindful behavior of individuals and organizations is more than simply being alert; it is a habit of mind that scans for subtle changes that cause trouble (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 237).

Weick and Sutcliffe (2001, 2007, 2015) define mindful as being alert, attentive, understanding, relating, and making connections. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) argued that mindfulness in an organization may be demonstrated by ongoing scrutiny of existing expectations, with continuous refinement as new information is gleaned. In addition, organizational mindfulness is maintaining the willingness and capability to invent new expectations make sense of unprecedented events while identifying context that will improve foresight and functioning. They conceptualized organizational mindfulness into five processes: preoccupation with failure; reluctance to simplify; sensitivity to operations; commitment to resilience; and deference to expertise (FSORE, 2015). Weick and Sutcliffe argued that if organizations practice these specified key principles, then they can be considered mindful groups and be prepared if something out of the ordinary occurs. In their research, Weick and Sutcliffe (2001, 2007, 2015) found at times organizations are so focused on making decisions that they fail to pay close attention to earlier events leading up to that point. To make matters worse, they plunge into action on the basis of their first impressions and then fail to revise their assumptions and expectations as new information comes to light. These companies continue to seek evidence that supports, rather than disproves, their actions because they only want confirmation of their responses disregarding the possibility that they might not be doing the best thing for the

company to have optimum success. Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) contended from their research synthesis of Ray, Baker, and Plowman's 2011 study of organizational mindfulness that for organizational mindfulness to produce strategic and operational reliability, it must be created at the top (leaders), shared across levels by middle management, and translated into action on the front line to be present.

As stated previously, Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001, 2006, 2007, 2015) first principle of a mindful organization is to maintain a preoccupation with failure because success can have liabilities. To develop a preoccupation with failure, a school leader should: articulate expectations; create awareness of vulnerability; actively track down bad news; clarify what constitutes good news; consolidate explanations; recognize that a near miss is a failure; and maintain a preoccupation with mistakes (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). A mindful school will recognize a small concern before it becomes a huge problem and clearly address the issue before it is blown out of proportion by stakeholders. To develop practices of mindfulness, individual and organizations need situations where they are not apprehensive about making mistakes and feel free to experiment (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 237).

The second principle of an effective organization is the reluctance to simplify. Mindful organizing is a process that is responsive to more than just failures. Possible probes of this principle would be: Is questioning encouraged at all levels of the organization? Are people encouraged to express different viewpoints? When people ask questions, are they labeled as troublemakers? Contingencies, differences, and details take more effort to remember but also better record vulnerable signs an unexpected situation (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 73). Life in schools is complex; teachers and administrators need to assume multiple perspectives to

understand diverse and multi-layered situations and take the necessary time to see each prong of a situation before acting upon it (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006).

The third principle is that organizations are sensitive to operations. When people have well-developed situational awareness, they can make the continuous adjustments that prevent errors from multiplying (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 12). Sensitivity involves a combination of attentiveness, alertness, and action that unfolds in real-time and is anchored in the present (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 79). Hoy (2002) asserted that sensitivity to teaching and learning enables real-time information so that there is little time lag in information processing. Preventing such an information delay means staying close to the teaching and learning that is occurring (p. 98). When a mistake happens, instead of the person being reprimanded or ignored, the mistake is seen as an opportunity for learning.

The fourth principle is a commitment to resilience. To be resilient is to be mindful about mistakes and correct them before they worsen and cause more serious harm (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 68). Mindful schools must have leadership that is abundantly skilled to handle change, interruptions, and recovery with ease. The goal is to act as if the unexpected situation is just like every other situation someone has faced and like *no* other situation that person ever faced (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015, p. 111). Mindful organizations and mindful leaders do not let failure paralyze; instead, they detect, contain, and rebound from mistakes (Hoy, 2002, p. 98).

Weick and Sutcliffe's (2015) fifth principle in FSORE is deference to expertise, basically looking to the one who knows the correct solution. In effective HROs, a sign of strength and confidence is to know when you have reached the limits of your knowledge and recruit help, even if it means seeking assistance from employees on the front line (in lower position or rank). Mindful school organizations avoid embracing rigid administrative practices. Rigid structures are

replaced with enabling structures, which promote a fluid decision-making system, in which consulting and listening to those with expertise is paramount (Hoy, 2002, p. 98). This is particularly significant when developing leadership practices.

Mindful leadership is not only possible but also necessary for the development of an organizational (collective) mindfulness (Hoy, 2002, p.106). Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) stated that schools that practice organizational mindfulness have a staff that develops the ability to anticipate surprise, so when the unexpected occurs, the school remains resilient, shows persistence, and skilled expertise (p. 240). Weick and Sutcliffe (2001, 2007) offered suggestions to assist leaders in creating mindfulness in an organization, especially schools. Hoy (2003) took these suggestions and put them in educator terms (p. 105):

Cultivate humility. School administrators need a healthy skepticism about their own accomplishments and concern about their potential for failure.

Welcome a bad day. When things go bad, an administrator can uncover more details and learn more about how things really work.

Speak up. Just because the administrator sees something clearly, do not assume that teachers see the same thing.

Be wary of good news. There is always enough bad news to go around. If school leaders are not hearing bad news, then teachers and subordinates are hiding it.

Develop skepticism in teachers. When information is met with skepticism, teachers make an independent effort to confirm the information.

Embrace a soft vigilance. Soft vigilance is a mindful state as contrasted with hyper-vigilance, which locks attention. Soft vigilance keeps an administrator's mind open to novelty and new information.

Significantly, in regard to organizational mindfulness, Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) argued that faculty trust in the school principal is most important, and teachers trusting each other is essential for overall school mindfulness. Trust requires a group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party while all participants are benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). These same characteristics of trust are necessary for school mindfulness. Langer

(2010) stated that if leaders of organizations are considered truly mindful, then their only task may be to promote and harness “distributed” mindfulness. When teachers and administrators ritually follow rules or comply with senseless orders, they are mindless, but when they substitute their judgments for routine responses, they turn mindful (Hoy, 2002, p. 95).

Mindful administrators seize the moment of opportunity, but inattentive ones, having missed the subtleties of change, find themselves unpleasantly surprised and trapped by the unexpected. Mindful management of the unexpected is heeding early warnings of trouble (Hoy et al, 2006, p. 237). Langer said leaders should make it simply *okay* not to know everything, rather than acting like because they are the leader that they have all the answers. Additionally, she argued that organizations to be mindful they must “eliminate zero-accident policies. If you have a zero accident policy, you are going to have a maximum-lying policy” (Langer, 2014, p. 3). In confirmation of Weick and Sutcliffe’s research, Hoy (2002) concluded that mindfulness in school organizations is demonstrated through catching the unexpected early; understanding the size of a problem does not demean importance; maintaining sensitivity to teaching and learning; practicing the ability to bounce back; and embracing a structure in which the expert in an area participates in decision making.

Academic Optimism

Academic optimism is a collective set of beliefs about the strengths and capabilities of schools that paints a rich picture of human agency in which optimism is the overarching theme that unites efficacy and trust with academic emphasis (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p. 196). Optimism (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006) is a central construct that bonds efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis because each concept contains a sense of the possible. A school in which the faculty believes it can make a difference, that students can learn, and achieves high academic

performance is practicing academic optimism. Academic optimism attempts to explain and nurture what is best in schools to facilitate student learning and has significance in regards to educational practices because it negates much of the power of socioeconomic factors in student success (Hoy et al., 2006).

The academic optimism of a school evolved from the general work on positive psychology rooted in humanist psychology (Hoy, 2013). The understanding that academic optimism emerged from the basic foundation of humanistic psychology is critical, specifically when looking at the implications of both academic optimism and mindfulness regarding educational outcomes. Both constructs encompass practices that can be identified, learned, and strengthened to have a positive and direct response to student learning and academic achievement. One of the founders of humanist psychology, Carl Rogers (1967), explored supporting themes that are an underlying influence of academic optimism. His hope for an educational system was that the persons at the core of the process (education) be adaptive and creative, be able to make responsible choices, be open to kaleidoscopic changes in their world, be worthy citizens of a fantastically expanding universe, and maintain student-centered teaching (p. 56). His prevailing desire for teachers in his educational system was that they have “profound trust in the human organism.” If one trusts the capacity of the human individual for developing his own potentiality, then one may permit him the opportunity to choose his way in learning. Rogers also stated that an educator should be: real, not a faceless embodiment of curricular requirements; not a sterile tube through which knowledge is passed from one generation to the next; accepting, valuing the individual student as having worth; empathic, able to understand the student’s reaction from the inside; and providing resources, not just the usual academic resources but human resources (pp. 59-61). Throughout Rogers’ work is the theme of optimism and

positivity. The notion of optimism is a powerful force for improvement according to Hoy (2012, p. 89). Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk-Hoy (2006) argue optimism matters as much as talent or motivation in achievement, and it may be learned and developed.

The academic optimism of schools is a collective construct that includes the cognitive, affective, and behavioral facets of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis (Beard, Hoy & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2010, p. 1136). Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk-Hoy (2006) have demonstrated at the collective level that the three properties come together in a unified force to create a positive academic environment, which they label as the academic optimism of a school.

Figure 1

Academic Optimism

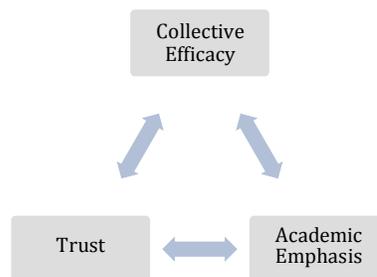


Figure 1 illustrates their arguments. The three concepts, collective efficacy, trust and academic emphasis have a *reciprocal causal relationship* with each variable interacting and functionally dependent on the other (Hoy, 2010; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). Collective efficacy, which is a group belief or expectation, engages the cognitive domain. The cognitive domain embodies the intellectual or mental processes of the brain (Slavin, 2012). The affective domain encompasses faculty trust in parents, students, and in one another. The affective realm is concerned with attitudes and values (Slavin, 2012). Academic emphasis is a

push for behaviors that recognize, support, and celebrate academic accomplishment that lie in the behavioral domain. This domain involves tangible behaviors or actions that occur with individuals (Slavin, 2012). Hoy, Tarter and Woolfolk-Hoy (2006) studied a diverse sample of 96 high schools with a random sample of teachers in Ohio. Their research focused on academic optimism in relationship to academic achievement. They hypothesized that academic optimism would make a significant contribution to student achievement and their research results demonstrated that it did. Their research challenged parts of James Coleman's report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966) for the National Center Educational Statistics that stated information such as the attributes of other students account for far more variation in the achievement of minority group children than do any aspects of the staff and even less the school facility. Basically, Coleman's research concluded that as the academic hopes and aspirations of fellow students increase, the achievement of minority group children will increase, regardless of any teacher's actions (p.302). Coleman also said,

Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context; and that this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. For equality of educational opportunity, the schools must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child's immediate social environment, and that strong independent effect is not present in American schools. (p. 325)

Contrary to Coleman's research, academic optimism research builds upon the effective schools research endeavors of Ron Edmonds. His work reinforced the relevance of student achievement as a result of strong leadership with the principal setting the tone and the belief held by teachers

that all students can learn (the principal and teachers have high expectations). Edmonds' premise was that all children are educable and the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of education that will be provided (Edmonds, 1979). Academic optimism research (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2010; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006) has molded with this theory and demonstrates that academic optimism has a meaningful impact on student achievement making the possibilities unlimited for students no matter the race, socioeconomic background, or environment. These initial studies on academic optimism have been replicated and continue to show a positive correlation between academic optimism and student achievement (Bevel, 2010; Dean, 2011; Mishoe, 2012; Nelson, 2012; Reeves, 2010) at various grade levels and socioeconomically diverse school settings, contradicting Coleman's 1966 report. Research conducted by Tschannen-Moran, Bankole, Mitchell, and Moore (2013) examined the perceptions of students in 49 elementary, middle, and high schools and determined the overall concepts surrounding academic optimism specifically in relationship forming a student's academic optimism. Their research found a strong correlation between collective efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis with student achievement. These findings suggest educators need not only focus on curriculum and instruction as avenues to influence education outcomes, but also can combine those efforts with an emphasis on developing the social conditions in schools between role groups that have an effect on achievement as well (p. 171). The three distinct properties of academic optimism that make the difference in student achievement are the collective efficacy of the faculty, overall trust with the school's faculty, parents, and students, and the academic emphasis of the school. It is also important to note that the findings from the research study demonstrated that student academic optimism was unrelated to socio-economic status (SES), leading the researchers to consider the possibility that SES may not be as influential as once

thought when other conditions of the school environment are taken into consideration (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2011, p. 150). Hoy's (2010) conclusion that offers the most substantial information is his argument that academic optimism can be learned; a pessimistic school can become an optimistic school (p. 108), and educators can be empowered to make a difference no matter what obstacles are faced. Thus researchers continue to demonstrate the power that emerges when all the constructs of academic optimism work in tandem, they have an impact on our educational system. To further understand academic optimism as a whole, each construct needs to be examined.

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy in the school setting is the perception of the teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive impact on the students (Beard, Joy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2010; Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Calik, Sezin, Kavgi, and Kilinc's (2012) international study examining the relationship between instructional leadership of school principals and collective efficacy in 328 classrooms in Ankara, Turkey found that school principals' instructional leadership behaviors have a positive and significant effect on teachers' self-efficacy with its indirect effect on collective efficacy (p. 2501). The research confirmed that when the principal demonstrated instructional leadership behaviors, teachers' perceptions about their efficacy grew stronger thereby increasing the collective efficacy of the school staff. Research regarding collective efficacy, in regard to academic achievement, began with Bandura in concert with his work regarding social cognitive theory. In his social cognitive theory, people are viewed as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating rather than as reactive organisms. This principle is rooted in a view of which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development and can make things happen by their actions (Pajares, 2002).

Efficacy is the belief in one's capability to handle situations. Bandura (1993) maintained that in the academic setting a student's efficacy drives his or her own learning; a teacher's belief in oneself motivates and enhances the learning environment; and the academic accomplishments of one's students and the collective belief of the faculty overall is instrumental in the total school's academic achievement. Jahnke's (2010) research of how teacher collective efficacy was developed and sustained in eight high achieving middle schools identified the crucial factors present for collective efficacy in schools. These factors are maintaining a positive and supportive environment, clear vision and goals, strong support system, high expectations by all stakeholders, and significant professional development (p. 121). One factor that Jahnke found in her study examining collective efficacy was that all schools reported that student support programs highly influenced student achievement. This factor is particularly significant with the Alabama State Department of Education's increasing emphasis on school systems providing a comprehensive student support program for Alabama students imbedded in the PLAN 2020 (2014).

Collective efficacy begins with one's practice of self-efficacy. Efficacy influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993, 1994, 1997). People strive to exercise control over events that affect their lives. By exerting influence in areas over which one has some control, a person is better able to realize desired outcomes and to prevent undesired ones (Bandura, 1997, p. 1). People with a strong sense of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1993, p. 144). Bandura (1997) argued that there are four main forms of influence when developing strong efficacy. These same elements can be found when enhancing one's self-efficacy as well as the collective efficacy of a school staff. The first, *mastery experiences*, involves acquiring the means for

creating responses to manage ever-changing life circumstances. When people persevere through adversity, they become stronger and able to handle more obstacles with success. In education, school achievements build teachers' beliefs in the capability of the faculty, whereas failures tend to deflate a sense of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004, p. 5). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy's (1998) research analysis of teacher efficacy supports Bandura's findings, citing teacher efficacy is not heightened when success is achieved through extensive external help, comes relatively late in learning, or is achieved through an easy and unimportant task. When this occurs, there can be an increased belief that one's performance has been a failure, which can lower a teacher's self-efficacy.

The second form of influence is undergoing *vicarious experiences*. This is when people or groups see a model similar to themselves responding to success and failure. With vicarious experiences, educators begin to decide which students can learn and how much, who is responsible, and whether teachers can make a difference in a student's achievement. Watching others teach with skill and proficiency can affect the observer's personal teaching competence (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998, p. 230). An example of this can be found in the replication of successful educational program across a wide variety of settings by schools aspiring to achieve similar results (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 5).

Social persuasion is the third way of strengthening people's beliefs that they possess what it takes to succeed (Bandura, 1997, p. 4). Verbal praise and placing people in situations of success are seen as examples of social persuasion. In the school setting, social persuasion may involve encouragement or advice from the principal, or it may involve discussions in the teachers' lounge, community, or in the media about the ability of teachers to influence students (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 6). Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk-Hoy's (2000) research guided by

Bandura's findings regarding collective efficacy and student achievement was specifically focused on studying 47 urban elementary schools. They found that the more teachers have the opportunity to influence instructionally relevant school decisions, the more likely a school is to be characterized by a robust sense of collective efficacy found (p. 502). The study provided suggestions for school administrators to improve collective efficacy of the staff with deliberate actions such as specifically designing staff development activities and action research projects that provided efficacy building mastery experiences; provide vicarious learning experiences such as visiting model schools; and model the belief that the staff is competent and can meet the challenges of the task related to effective schooling (p.503).

The final form of influence in regard to efficacy is a person's *physiological and emotional state* in assessing one's capabilities. To alter efficacy beliefs, one must enhance physical status, reduce stress and negative emotional tendencies, and correct misconceptions of bodily states (Bandura, 1997, p. 4). Organizations with strong beliefs in the group's capability can tolerate pressure, endure crises, and continue to function without devastating consequences. These organizations learn to rise to the challenge when confronted with disruptive forces. Less effective organizations are more likely to react dysfunctionally, which increases the likelihood of failure (Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004, p. 6).

Investigations regarding collective efficacy emphasize teachers have not only self-efficacy perceptions influencing student learning but also valid beliefs about the joint capability of a school faculty (Goddard et al., 2004). Teachers operate collectively within an interactive social system, rather than as isolates, demonstrating perceived collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). A key finding in Bandura's research (2004) is that the belief systems of school staffs create school cultures that can have vitalizing or demoralizing effects on how well schools

function as a social system. Schools in which the staff collectively judged themselves as powerless to get students to achieve academic success conveyed a group sense of academic ineffectiveness that could pervade the entire life of the school. Schools in which staff members believed themselves capable of promoting academic success invigorated their schools with a positive atmosphere for development that promoted academic achievement regardless of the type of student they served (Bandura, 1997, p. 20). In schools possessed by a high degree of perceived collective efficacy, new teachers learn that extra effort and educational success are the norm. In turn, these high expectations for action create a practice that encourages all teachers to do what it takes to excel and discourages them from giving up when faced with difficult challenges (Goddard et al., 2004, p. 6).

Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk-Hoy (2004) suggested additional research involving important aspects of schooling regarding students' emotional growth and development or community involvement in relationship to collective efficacy beliefs and student achievement would be useful. Wahlstrom and Louis' (2008), in their quantitative research involving 4,165 kindergarten to 12th grade teachers in a sample of schools across the United States examining principal leadership, argued for further research regarding collective efficacy in relation to trust, specifically in regards to how a sense of efficacy may support or inhibit a teacher's willingness to share his or her instructional practice (p. 467).

Bandura (1994, 2004) argued that the strength of organizations lies partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face, and improve their lives through unified effort. Collective efficacy impacts what they choose to do as a group, effort, and endurance "stick-with-it-ness," and the possibility for success. Goddard, LoGerfo, and Hoy's research (2004) suggested that high levels of collective efficacy are found in groups that share

decision-making power and cooperatively support each other, which in schools can lead to better performance. Notably, a school's collective sense of efficacy at the beginning of the academic year predicts the level of academic achievement at the end of the year in spite of the students' characteristics, their prior level of academic achievement, and the staff's skill level (Bandura, 2007, p. 21). These findings supported Bandura's (1997) findings that teaching staffs, even in schools heavily populated with poor and minority students, who firmly believe students are teachable, achieve *measurable* academic success when the schools collective sense of efficacy is strong.

Trust

Trust is one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is open, honest, reliable, competent, and benevolent (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Trust may take days, months, and even years to be fully developed and effectively beneficial for the relationship between two parties. But all too quickly, all of that work to create a trusting bond may be destroyed, and trust will cease to no longer exist. As school leaders continue to strive to for academic success, great attention must be paid to the construct of trust in educational organizations.

Trust, between individuals and within organizations, has been defined in many ways throughout history. Trust has been pondered as a state of mind or a benevolent interaction between to beings. Tschannen-Moran (2014) has equated trust to both glue and lubricant. As *glue*, trust binds organizational participants to one another. Without it, things fall apart. To be productive and to accomplish organizational goals, schools need cohesive and cooperative relationships. As a *lubricant*, trust greases the machinery of an organization (Tschannen-Moran,

2014, p. 18). In Tschannen-Moran's book (2014), *Trust Matters: Leadership for Successful Schools*, she identifies numerous research projects conducted with colleagues regarding trust specifically relating to school leadership. Not only did she solidify the importance of maintaining and building trust to create productive schools, but she also reviewed the downside to broken trust. The school leader may be a critical force in reinstating trust when it is broken, remaining "above the fray" actively seeking to mend trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997, p. 248). If trust breaks down within any system, distrust can spread like a cancer, undermining academic performance (p. 251). In school, when trust is broken between the principal and teacher, one likely consequence is possible retribution, releasing disparaging forces that undermine the effectiveness of the organization. Both administrators and teachers need to be aware of the dramatic costs of broken trust and use that knowledge to prevent abuse of power and promote genuine relationships. Rebuilding broken trust is essential for a school to be successful. In cultures of high trust, people do not hesitate when seeking help because they do not fear that others will make them feel inadequate or incompetent (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 24).

Tarter, Bliss, and Hoy's research (1989) involving 72 secondary schools and 1083 teachers examined faculty trust in colleagues and faculty trust in principals. They found leadership behavior in the principal predicts trust in the administration; principal behaviors provide an open, supportive, and nurturing environment; a principal who is genuinely helpful and concerned about the staff can successfully foster a culture of trust. Additionally, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1997) concluded that trust in a school can be nurtured or weakened by the behavior of the school leader. Trust in the principal is determined primarily by the behavior of the principal (Tarter, Bliss & Hoy, 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997). The principal's impact in generating trust among staff seems limited with little effect on the trust that teachers

have with each other. Trust is related to a climate of openness, collegiality, professionalism, and authenticity. Faculty trust is basically determined by the behavior of teachers, closely linked to how teachers treat each other (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997, p. 350).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) established a clearer definition of trust by identifying the five facets of trust. The first, benevolence, is the confidence that one's well-being will be protected by the person in whom one has placed trust. School leaders can promote trust by showing consideration and sensitivity to teachers' needs. Honesty, the second facet, concerns a person's character, integrity and authenticity. People display honesty by meaning what they say and do. For the school leaders, this may be the most difficult of all because in an effort to please everyone or avoid conflict they fail to be totally upfront and completely honest (p. 26). The third facet of trust is openness. Openness is when relevant information is shared between two parties, often making them vulnerable. Principals and teachers who guard information provoke suspicion, not openness and trust (Hoy, Gage and Tarter, 2006, p. 242). Tschannen-Moran (2014) lists reliability as the fourth facet of trust. Reliability combines a sense of predictability with caring and competence and implies a sense of confidence that people can "rest assured" that this person will do what is expected on a regular basis (p. 33). The final facet of trust is competence. Competence is the ability to perform a task as expected. Skills related to competence include working hard, solving problems, resolving conflicts, setting high standards, and setting a good example (p. 36). Teachers and principals earn the trust of their students first and foremost by demonstrating that they care, even if the process of education at times requires the correction of misbehavior and misguided thinking (p. 167).

Hoy and Sweetland's (2001) research on enabling school structures confirmed several roles of trust regarding successful school organization. Their research demonstrated the

importance of principals to help teachers solve problems, foster openness, and support teachers to do their jobs without undue concern for conflict and punishment, thereby encouraging trust. These research results also showed that faculty trust aided in student achievement. Additional research by Goddard, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) examining 452 teachers and 2,536 students in 47 urban schools demonstrated a significantly strong correlation between trust in regard to almost every relationship in the school setting. Considering that the school's demographic characteristics, prior achievement, and socioeconomic status all varied, *trust* was a significant positive predictor of differences among schools in student achievement. This research established that when teachers believe their students are competent and reliable, they create learning environments that facilitate student academic success. When students trust their teachers, they are more likely to take the risks that new learning requires (p. 14). When teachers trust their students, and when they believe that their students are respectful, honest, reliable, open, and competent, teachers are more likely to create a learning environment that facilitates academic mindfulness and academic mindfulness reinforces trust (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter 2006, p. 251). Additional research, conducted by Adams (2014) on collective student trust, using data from 1,646 students from 56 elementary schools found that collective trust is the strongest school-level antecedent of positive behavior, achievement, and student beliefs (p. 151). Adams' study suggested schools with a culture of student trust in teachers are more effective in promoting academic achievement and overall student success. Trustworthy relationships with teachers can provide support for the social, cognitive, and psychological needs of students even when there is a lack of tangible resources. Mitchell, Forsyth, and Robinson (2008) directed research which specifically targeted trust and school identification, and they found that

establishing strong, caring, and trusting relationships with parents and students is essential for positive school identification.

In Walstrom and Louis (2008) research, trust, a key characteristic of school improvement and student achievement, was clearly less important than they had anticipated originally in their research in regards to the school principal. They were surprised by this finding because the measure of trust included items that measured the principal's role in providing both direct and indirect support for instruction. They speculated the principal may be perceived as caring about and supportive of good instruction but may still not have much to say about the deliberate strategic choices that teachers implement instructional practices (p. 482). Even with this research not producing strong results in regard to teacher trust in principals, nevertheless Walstrom and Louis cite Tschannen-Moran's research on trust. More important, Tschannen-Moran's research demonstrates a trusted leader is the foundation for creating other forms of trust, and it allows the school to manage resources more effectively. Tschannen-Moran's (2014) findings indicated that the principal sets that tone for the school. The principal's values, attitudes, and behaviors have a significant influence on the culture of the school (p. 254).

Trust has also been included in research in regards to mindfulness. Hoy, Gage, and Tarter (2006) conducted research examining the relationship between school mindfulness and faculty trust in 75 middle schools with 2,600 teachers. This research found trust and mindfulness are necessary for each other. Faculty trust promotes school mindfulness; trust should provide a setting in which people are not afraid of breaking new ground, taking risks, and making errors. Trust involves taking risks and making oneself vulnerable to another in confidence that the other will act in ways that are not detrimental to the trusting party (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 240). Mindful schools develop open and trusting relationships between administrators and teachers. By

encouraging faculty members to play with ideas, create novelty in their classrooms, feel safe while taking reasonable risks, experiment, and be resilient, the principal can have a profound effect on school mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 253).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) contended that trust in school principals continues to prove significantly important for student success. Their study suggested that principals must foster and maintain trust in order to lead schools effectively, engage collegially with teachers in ways that are consistently honest, open, benevolent, and consistently demonstrate sound knowledge and competent decision making associated with administering academic programs (p. 66). Their study examined the beliefs of over 3000 teachers, confirming the findings that have been found in previous research. It would be remiss not to include some of the discussion points from this study in regard to school leadership: first, teachers want to be able to depend upon the actions of their principal, including the trust that decisions will be followed through on and that promises will be kept. Second, principals need to be approachable and open in their attitudes as they engage with teachers about instruction. Third, principal leadership behaviors and trustworthiness are related to the level of academic emphasis in a school, suggesting that a principal who is engaged in the instructional program is more likely to lead a school where academics are taken seriously. As an indication of the extent to which trust matters is evident in their statement, “Superintendents need to set a tone of trust in their districts by not only modeling trustworthy behaviors themselves but also by extending trust to their principals through genuine shared decision-making” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 86). Research regarding trust in organizations, specifically regarding leadership at all levels in educational entities, has proven that *trust* is essential for schools to be successful.

Academic Emphasis

Academic emphasis is a component of school climate and describes a school's collective belief that teaching and learning are the central purpose in school (Wagner & Dipaola, 2011, p. 895). It defines the extent to which a school is driven by the academic performance of its students. Schools with strong measures of academic emphasis make effective student learning the central focus. In these schools, teachers share a sense of confidence in students' abilities and the belief that all students can reach high academic standards. The principal must demonstrate in both words and actions an optimistic belief that all students can achieve, while developing a school culture in which teachers and students alike respect hard work and academic success (Hoy & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2009, p. 3). Schools with strong academic emphasis are deemed *healthy*. In healthy schools, teachers like each other, student's respect each other and *all* are highly motivated (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Educators create learning environments that are orderly and serious, with high goals and expectations (Tschannen-Moran & Garies, 2015, p. 73). Academic emphasis highlights the ability of students to learn and presses for positive academic behaviors in schools. Achievements, especially academic, of students and teachers are celebrated (Hoy, Tarter & Woolfolk-Hoy 2006, p. 441). Students are publicly recognized and honored through all types of means: such as social media, traditional honor assemblies, honor societies, board meetings, and other community forums. In return, students respect the academic norms of the school, look up to peers who are successful academically, and work hard to meet the high expectations that have been set for them (Hoy et al., 2006). Academic emphasis has also been coined as the term academic press. Academic press is seen as a school's quest for instructional excellence heightening student achievement. It brings together the combination of teachers setting high

expectations and goals with the students responding to challenge and the principal supporting by supplying all necessary resources (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997, p. 343).

Goddard, Sweetland, and Hoy's research (2000) involving teachers and students in 45 elementary schools in a large Midwest school district provided support for academic emphasis as a viable scheme for educators to develop and promote to see academic achievement progress in schools. They argued that academic emphasis is a cohesive construct that promotes student achievement with the school's climate influencing not only individual teacher and student behavior but also reinforcing a pattern of collective beliefs that are good for the school. They stated that the assumptions of social cognitive theory, originating from Bandura, can be applied at the organizational level to explain the influence of a climate of academic emphasis on differences in student achievement. In a school with a high level of academic emphasis, school members are more likely to act purposefully to enhance student learning (p. 699).

Theoretical Rationale

As previously mentioned in the Alabama State Department of Education's Plan 2020 (2014), every school must have an effective leader who is capable of making critical decisions in regards to improving student learning. The question should be asked if all of the schools in the State of Alabama are currently being served by an effective leader and if not, what can be done to increase the chance that this can happen; this study begins to address that question. Kouzes and Posner (2007) stated that good leadership is an understandable and universal process. Although each leader is a unique individual, there are shared patterns to the practice of effective leadership and these practices can be learned (p. xiii). It is in the vein that this research is especially important. Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk-Hoy (2006) have argued that the practice of

academic optimism can be learned and be a method for improving leadership practices in the school. Langer (1989), Weick and Sutcliffe (2007), and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' research (2015) have established methods to learn mindfulness in regard to leadership skills. With that understanding and the documentation, as independent practices, mindfulness and academic optimism have contributed genuine value in enabling school leaders to be more effective in the day-to-day operations that can directly affect academic achievement. In this research study, the school leader's mindfulness (individual) is determined by the perception that the faculty has of the principal.

Therefore, the literature suggests that mindfulness and academic optimism are positively related through corresponding similarities and concepts. This knowledge, coupled with the desire to explore further the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism in school organizations, resulted in three hypotheses:

H1: The greater degree of the school's organizational mindfulness the greater degree of the school's academic optimism.

H2: The greater degree of the principal's individual mindfulness the greater degree of school's academic optimism.

H3: The variables of organizational mindfulness, individual mindfulness, collective efficacy, faculty trust and academic emphasis will have a positive relationship with academic optimism.

H4: The variable of socio-economic status (SES) of the school will have a significant impact on mindfulness and academic optimism of the school.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this study examined mindfulness and academic optimism, clearly reflecting the potential for the use of these two constructs working independently and collectively to positively impact leadership practices to improve student achievement in Alabama schools. Mindfulness offers school leaders and staff fresh ideas to examine information from varying perspectives as well as cultivating them to use an open, creative, and probabilistic state of mind when analyzing school situations. Academic optimism is built on the interrelationship of efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis and is shown to strengthen the leader and cultivate the group to face challenges. Combining these two constructs together to work in tandem should allow for a positive and strong correlation in regards to student success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the constructs of mindfulness and academic optimism in selected public schools in Alabama State Board of Education District 8, located in Northern Alabama. This quantitative study looked for a relationship between the independent variable, mindfulness and the dependent variable, academic optimism, a construct which is defined by the concepts of collective efficacy, faculty trust and academic emphasis. Optimism is the primary construct that unites the concepts of efficacy, trust and academic emphasis because each contains a sense of the possible (Hoy, 2010, p. 29). This study examined the two powerful constructs in relationship with each other with the expectation that when united, school leaders will have a model to create academic excellence in their school. This chapter will discuss the sample, the research design, the instrumentation, the data collection methods, and the statistical analysis that was used with this study.

Sample

Data were gathered from an inquiry of teachers from selected public school systems in Alabama State Board of Education (ALSDE) District 8 located in Northern Alabama an on-hand sample. Originally, there were 124 schools asked to participate in this study. After the initial request of the ALSDE District 8 superintendents, three agreed for their school systems agreed to participate in this research endeavor. Thus, their response resulted in a small on-hand sample of

39 schools. The participants were guaranteed anonymity with neither individual names nor the names of the schools or districts used in the study; the on-line program for the surveys does not allow individual participant identification. The complete study was made available to each participating district.

Research Design

A quantitative research design was the chosen method of investigation between mindfulness and academic optimism because the relationship between these two variables was examined. This study, with a limited degree of replication, hoped to validate past findings in regards to these two constructs to provide critical guidance and tools to strengthen school leadership. The variables were each measured through cross-sectional surveys specifically designed for each concept. By using surveys that have been a research instrument in the past, the potential to decrease fragmentation and increase validity in measurement was amplified (McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). Each survey design provided a numeric description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of the sample population of teachers in regards to individual and organizational mindfulness with academic optimism, representing therefore a standard characteristic of survey research (Creswell, 2014, p. 155). In addition, the surveys provided responses that were analyzed through statistical procedures with the confidence that the findings could be generalized and replicated (Creswell, 2014, p. 13). Both surveys were incorporated into one survey with two distinct separate parts within the on-line survey system. This method of collection offered an easy, convenient, and cost-effective process for the respondent with the capability to reach a large number of participants. A secure transmission was enabled to protect data as it moved along communication pathways between the respondent's computer and SurveyMonkey servers.

Also the IP address tracking was disabled to make surveys anonymous. Each district's protocol in regards to educational research was taken into consideration. In addition, free and reduced lunch data were used to control for socioeconomic status (SES).

Instrumentation

This quantitative study used two survey instruments. The survey instruments were merged into one tool to simplify the input method for participants. The first set of data were collected from responses from the mindfulness survey, School Mindfulness Scale (M-Scale) developed by Hoy and Gage (2003). The M-Scale is a 20-item 6-point Likert-type scale that measures the degree to which the school is a mindful organization; the higher the score, the greater the extent of school mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2004). The M-Scale rests on five properties: a focus on mistakes; reluctance to simplify; sensitivity to teaching and learning; commitment to resilience; and deference to expertise in problem solving (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 245).

Items for this survey are as follows:

Mindfulness Items:

1. The principals welcome challenges from teachers.
2. When a crisis occurs, the principal deals with it so we can get back to teaching.
3. My principal negotiates difference without destroying the diversity of opinions.
4. The principal of this school does not value the opinions of the teachers.
5. My principal is an expert on teaching and learning.
6. My principal often jumps to conclusions.
7. Teachers do not trust the principal enough to admit their mistakes.
8. Mistakes are seen as important sources of information.
9. In times of crisis, it takes my principal too much time to effectively deal with the situation.
10. My principal does not really know what is happening in most classrooms.
11. When things don't go well, teachers bounce back quickly.
12. Teachers in my building learn from their mistakes and change so they do not happen again.
13. In this school, teachers welcome feedback about ways to improve.
14. Teachers negotiate differences among each other without destroying the diversity of opinions.

15. Too many teachers in my building give up when things go bad.
16. Teachers in this school value expertise more than authority.
17. Most teachers in this building are reluctant to change.
18. Teachers in this school jump to conclusions.
19. People in this school respect power more than knowledge.
20. In my building, teachers hide mistakes.

The second survey, School Academic Optimism Survey (SAOS) designed by Hoy (2005), was used to assess academic optimism. The measurement of academic optimism at the school level is comprised of a 30-item, Likert-type scale survey made up of three parts: sense of collective efficacy; faculty trust in students and parents; and the school's academic emphasis. Combining the measures of these three components generates a valuable representation of the level of school academic optimism. Items for this survey are as follows:

Collective Sense of Self-Efficacy Items:

1. Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students.
2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.
3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.
4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results.
5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.
6. These students come to school ready to learn.
7. Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.
8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.
9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.
10. The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.
11. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.
12. Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here.

Trust Items:

1. Teachers in this school trust their students.
2. Teachers in this school trust the parents.
3. Students in this school care about each other.
4. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.
5. Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work.
6. Teachers can count upon parental support.
7. Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.
8. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.

9. Teachers can believe what parents tell them.
10. Students here are secretive.

Academic Emphasis Items:

1. The school sets high standards for performance.
2. Students respect others who get good grades.
3. Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.
4. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.
5. Students try hard to improve on previous work.
6. The learning environment is orderly and orderly.
7. The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.
8. Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.

Data Collection

Data were collected through surveys that were emailed to school faculties in accordance to each school system's policy regarding educational research. The following recommendations concerning the contact e-mail strategies from Dillman's book (2014), *Internet, Phone, Mail and Mixed Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* were followed:

The first email introduced recipients to the survey, explain why they were chosen and emphasized why their response was important. It contained all essential information needed to complete the survey.

The second email served as a thank-you to those who have completed the survey and a reminder emphasizing why their response is important for those who had not responded.

The final reminder focused in a friendly way that the survey window was drawing to a close and there was a short amount of time to complete the survey.

See Appendix D for teacher correspondence. The correspondence took place over a three-week window. The data collection method used the Internet to send surveys to teachers by email through each district's teacher portal. By having emails sent to participants through the district teacher portal the likelihood of being flagged as spam email was minimized.

Initial contact was made with selected school systems' superintendents through two methods to help increase the possibility of each school system's participation. An introductory

letter was sent from Alabama State Board of Education District 8 Representative, Mary Scott Hunter, which explained the research endeavor and requested support to allow this research to be conducted in their school system. Direct contact was made through a written request handled through the postal service with a follow-up email seeking permission to conduct research in their school system (Appendix B). After proper system approval was granted and superintendents selected a district contact person, an informational email was sent to the principal of each school (Appendix C). This email explained the research and also detailed specifics regarding time frame and anonymity of research data. After successfully following these procedures, the first initial email was sent to teaching staffs at each school within the school district.

This study was a non-medical, human research study that was solely involved in the social and behavioral aspects of scientific research. All parts of the University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative coursework have been completed. Participation in this research study was strictly voluntary and all information was confidential. Refusal to participate involved no penalty or loss of benefits with no known foreseeable discomforts or risks to be expected from participation on this study.

Statistical Analysis

The unit of analysis used in this study was the school, not the individual faculty members. Even with the unit of analysis being the school, the data collected was information provided by each school's set of teacher participants. In each survey situation, the responses are the teacher's personal perception, opinion or bias regarding the school or the school principal. The data results were calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Statistical procedures used in this research included means, standard deviations, and range of scores for these variables as suggested by Creswell (2014, p. 162). A simple linear regression

analysis was applied to determine if unique and significant relationships existed between school mindfulness, individual mindfulness, academic optimism, collective efficacy, faculty trust, academic emphasis, and socio-economic status. Multiple regression correlation analysis was conducted to provide information regarding the influence when combining the independent variables on the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics were utilized when analyzing the variable in the following research questions:

What is the relationship between school's organizational mindfulness and the academic optimism of the school?

What is the relationship between principal's individual mindfulness and the academic optimism of the school?

What is the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) of the school on the academic optimism and mindfulness of the school?

In conclusion, after analyzing results, a summary is given on to what degree the results answered the research questions, the discussion of statistical significance and the correlations of the constructs in chapter four. A discussion of the findings for the implementation of each practice and suggested implications is presented in chapter five.

Summary

This quantitative study of the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism looked for the association between the variables of mindfulness and academic optimism, which is defined by the concepts of academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust, in selected public school systems in Alabama State Board of Education District 8 located in Northern Alabama. In leadership, the construct of mindfulness can be simply explained as the

noticing of new things. *Noticing* puts school leaders in the present, being sensitive to context and aware of change (Langer, 2010). Academic optimism is the individual belief of educators that they can teach effectively, their students can learn, and parents support them. If the constructs of mindfulness and academic optimism have a positive relationship, this research can prove beneficial for school leadership.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism in the school setting. This chapter discusses the relationships between the two constructs, mindfulness and academic optimism, with the five sub variables of individual mindfulness, collective efficacy, faculty trust, academic emphasis, and socio-economic status. Both mindfulness and academic optimism were examined to see the influence each paradigm has on the other in an academic setting, particularly noting any prominent link to school leadership. The first construct, school mindfulness, is reinforced by the variable of individual mindfulness. The second construct, academic optimism, is defined by three variables; collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. The final, and important, variable is socio-economic status (SES). The socio-economic status (SES) information was collected from the 2015-2016 Alabama School Free and Reduced Lunch data report found on the Alabama State Department of Education website. Any *school success* research study that did not include socioeconomic status would be falsely skewed (Kearney et al., 2013, p. 331). Included in this chapter are the descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations together with findings. The unit of analysis in this study is the school but descriptive statistical information in regard to research participants will be given to strengthen the overall examination of results.

This researcher collected and analyzed data from 39 schools to provide answers to the research questions presented in chapter one and address the three hypotheses formulated in

chapter two of this study. Two survey instruments plus the SES of each school are used to address these inquiries related to mindfulness and academic optimism. Mindfulness was measured using the School Mindfulness Scale (M-Scale) and academic optimism was measured using the School Academic Optimism Survey (SAOS) (Appendix A). The M-Scale is a 20-item, 6-point Likert-type scale that measures the degree to which the school is a mindful organization (Hoy et al., 2004). A sub-set of questions were analyzed to seek the school leaders' individual mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006). To assess each school's academic optimism, the School Academic Optimism Survey (Hoy, 2005), comprised of a 30-item, Likert-type scale survey, made up of three parts--collective sense of efficacy, faculty trust in students and parents, and the school's academic emphasis --was used. Combining the measures of these three components created the representation of the level of school academic optimism.

Descriptive Statistics

Originally, this study was intended assess the teachers in the schools in seven school systems in Alabama State Board of Education District 8 in Northern Alabama. With the assistance of State Board of Education member, Mary Scott Hunter, three of the invited seven school systems agreed to participate. The superintendents of the districts that chose not to take part cited different reasons as to why they would not participate. One reason quoted was political activity within their system hindered the superintendent's or their school system's involvement in outside research. The second reason mentioned was the number of surveys already being used in their district prohibited participation. In contrast, in all three participating school systems, each superintendent was engaged and communicative about this research project. In addition, the contributing superintendents were all appointed by their school board, none was elected.

In this research study, there were a total of 577 elementary and secondary (middle and high school) teachers in 39 schools in the three systems participating. The sample of schools in this study was comprised of 21 elementary, 9 middle, and 9 high schools in suburban and rural areas. In the survey process, demographic information about each participant was collected. Educators representing all grade levels were asked to participate in this research project so that an overall appraisal regarding mindfulness and academic optimism could be established. When probing information in regard to the research data in each survey situation, the responses are the teacher’s personal perception, opinion, or bias regarding the school organization overall or the school principal individually. Chart 1 reflects the percentage of the participants’ grade level currently taught at their school. Overall, there were more middle and high school teachers (58.6%) participating in this study than elementary teachers (41.4%), and the mode of participants represented the ninth to twelfth grade (32.2%).

Chart 1

Percentage of the Grade Level Taught at the Current School by Survey Participant

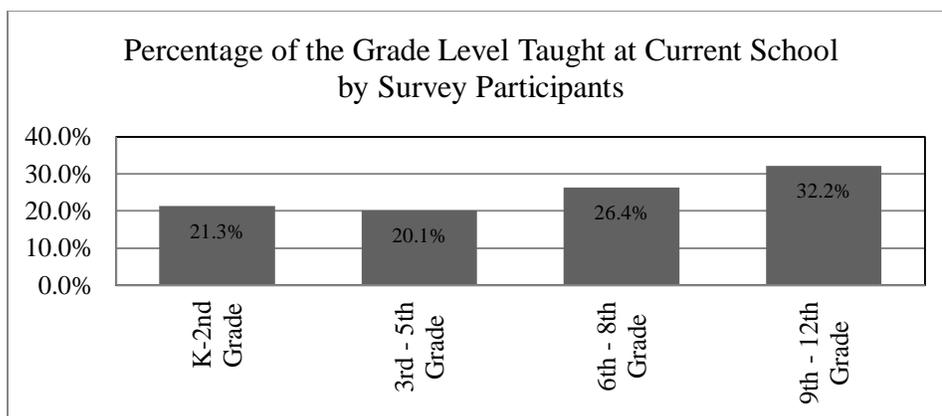


Table 1 reflects the percentage of the survey participants categorized by age and gender. Overall, there were more female participants (73%) than male participants (17%) and a majority

of the contributors were in the age range of 40-49 (36%). The lowest percentage of participants that contributed to the study was in the age group of the 60 and older range (6%).

Table 1

Percentages of the Age and Gender of Survey Participants

<i>Gender</i>	Female (73%)	Male (17%)	Total Percentages
<i>Age</i>			
21-29	9%	5%	9%
30-39	26%	23%	25%
40-49	36%	36%	36%
50-59	24%	27%	24%
60 or older	5%	9%	6%

Table 2 shows the percentage of the highest levels of education completed by survey participants. The data show that more than two-thirds of the teachers surveyed had a master's degree or higher (71%). It should be mentioned that only 2% of the 577 participants held a doctoral degree.

Table 2

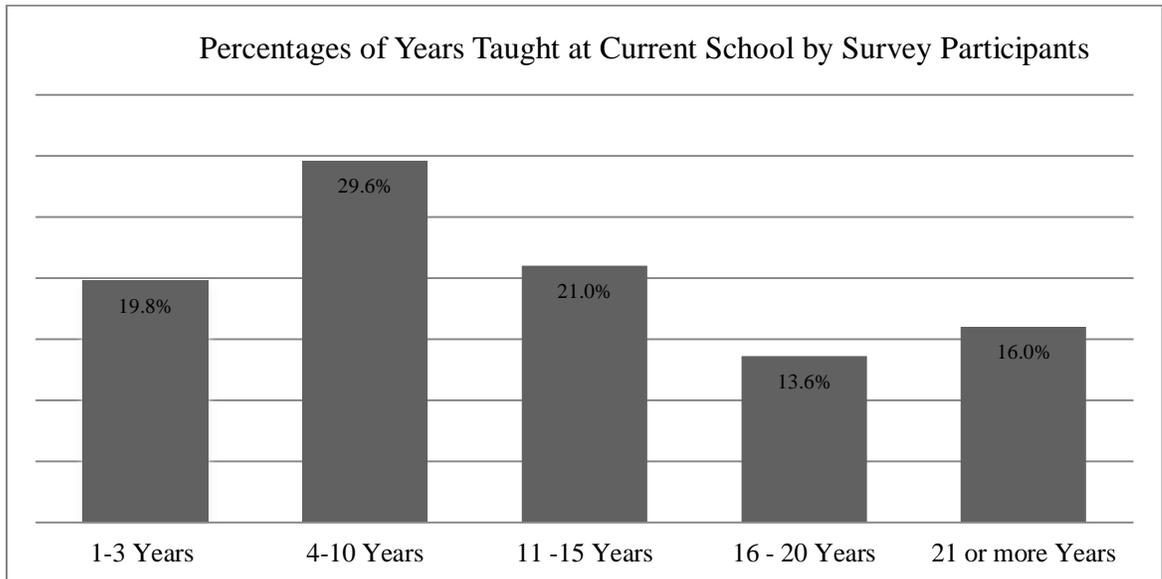
Percentages of the Highest Level of Education Completed by Survey Participants

Bachelor's Degree	29%
Master's Degree	58%
Educational Specialist	11%
Doctoral Degree	2%

Chart 2 shows the percentage of years taught at the participant's school. It should be noted that the mode of contributors (29.6%) that participated in the study had worked at their current school for 4-10 years. The lowest percentage of participants (13.6%) in this study have worked at their current school for 16-20 years.

Chart 2

Percentage of Years Taught at the Current School by Survey Participants



Additional Information

Optimism is the overarching construct that unites efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis of a school with each conveying a sense of the possible (Hoy, Tarter & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006, p. 431). A score of 650 on academic optimism represents a very high score while as a score of 350 depicts a very pessimistic view on academic optimism; a score of 500 is the average. The range and interpretation of scores is based upon the normal distribution (Hoy et al., 2006) validated in previous research studies. Of all of the 39 schools surveyed, 28 schools had a faculty that shares the cultural belief of academic optimism over the average scores of the norming group. The academic optimism scores for each school are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Total Distribution of Academic Optimism Scores (N=number of schools)

If the score is 200, it is lower than 99% of the schools.	0 (N)
If the score is 300, it is lower than 97% of the schools.	0 (N)
If the score is 400, it is lower than 84% of the schools.	1 (N)
If the score is 500, it is average.	10 (N)
If the score is 600, it is higher than 84% of the schools.	18 (N)
If the score is 700, it is higher than 97% of the schools.	8 (N)
If the score is 800, it is higher than 99% of the schools.	2 (N)

When examining closer the total distribution of academic optimism scores in relationship to the demographics of the participants found in the average to below average (scores 500 or lower) academically optimistic schools versus the substantially above average academically optimistic schools (scores 700 or higher), there was one outstanding difference within the two selected groups of schools (Chart 3). The prominent difference within the two selected groups of schools examined was the grade level being taught by a majority of survey participants. In the average to below average academically optimistic schools, the participants taught in the 9th to 12th grade and in the substantially above average academically optimistic schools, the participants worked in grades kindergarten to 5th grade.

Chart 3

Comparison of the participants in the Average to Below Average Academically Optimistic Schools and the Very Above Average Academically Optimistic Schools

Average to Below Average Academically Optimistic Schools (11)	Very Above Average Academically Optimistic Schools (10)
76% Female	84% Female
46% Between the Ages of 40 to 49	38% Between the Ages of 40-49
36% Working at Current School 4-10 Years	30% Working at Current School 4-10 Years
74% Hold a Master's Degree or Higher	66% Hold a Master's Degree or Higher
69% Work in Grades 9-12	60% Work in Grades K-5

Table 4 gives the breakdown of mindfulness scores for the 39 schools derived from the Mindfulness Scale survey. The Mindfulness Scale (M-Scale) measures the degree to which a school is a mindful organization. In previous research studies, the reliability of the school mindfulness scale use in this study was consistently high, .90 or higher (Hoy et al., 2004). The M-Scale has two significantly correlated factors: mindfulness in the school leader and mindfulness of faculty, each measured by 10 items. Both factors measure all five elements of mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006). The five key principles of mindfulness are preoccupation with failure (focus on mistakes), reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations (teaching and learning), commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (problem-solving). The higher the overall school score reflects the greater the school mindfulness. The range of scores is 1 as the lowest and 6 as the highest (extremely mindful). A substantial majority of the 39 schools, 36 of those 39, were above average in the practice of mindfulness.

Table 4

Total Distribution of Mindfulness Scores

1.0-1.9	Not Very Mindful	0 (N)
2.0-2.9	Below Average Practice of Mindfulness	0 (N)
3.0- 3.9	Average Practice of Mindfulness	3 (N)
4.0-4.9	Above Average Practice of Mindfulness	33 (N)
5.0-5.9	High Practice of Mindfulness	3 (N)
6.0	Extremely High Practice of Mindfulness	0 (N)

N= number of schools

With a majority of the schools being in the above average range for mindfulness, a closer look was taken at the three schools which did not fall into this category. It needs to be mentioned that all three of these schools were also in the below average group for academic optimism. In looking at the three schools, a majority of the participants were female (92%), over the age of 50

years old (67%), worked at that current school over 16 years (72%), taught in the middle grades (6-8) grades (62%) and hold a master's degree or higher (79%).

Measures

This study examined 39 schools in 3 school systems in North Alabama. Table 5 indicates the descriptive characteristics of the measures including socio-economic status (SES). Data used for this study are the averages of the teachers' responses on the two surveys used at each of the schools. The responses in this research study are the teacher's personal perception, opinion, or bias regarding the school organization overall or the school principal individually. The school is the unit of analysis for this study and is represented with (*N*). The central tendency of mean and the measures of variability, range, and standard deviation were examined for each variable.

Table 5

Descriptive Characteristics of Measures

	<i>N</i>	Range	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
School Mindfulness	39	1.37	3.70	5.07	4.53	.33
Individual Mindfulness	39	1.49	3.90	5.39	4.72	.43
Academic Optimism	39	1.38	3.11	4.49	3.96	.30
Collective Efficacy	39	1.77	3.53	5.30	4.46	.37
Faculty Trust	39	1.94	3.20	5.14	4.29	.41
Academic Emphasis	39	.86	2.60	3.46	3.11	.22
SES	39	48.49	21.06	69.55	43.77	13.86

Reliability

To examine the consistency of the School Mindfulness Scale and the School Academic Optimism Scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability score was determined for each scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability score examines the internal consistency for each measure. The alpha coefficient score for the School Mindfulness Scale is .904 and the School

Academic Optimism Scale is .929. These results demonstrate a high score of reliability. The reliability of both measures is additionally strengthened as each instrument was previously tested for reliability and validity in prior research (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006).

Correlations

Table 6 presents the correlations between all variables examined in the study by reflecting the correlation coefficient of each variable (r). The correlations of the variables in this study indicate the strength and extent of each variable in linear relationship to each other. With the exception of SES, all of the correlations of the variables are at strong positive degrees and have strong relationships with the numerical results showing more than 0.4 ($p < .01$).

Table 6

Correlations of all Variables Examined in the Study

Variables	SM	IM	AO	CE	FT	AE	SES
School Mindfulness	1	.85**	.65**	.68**	.50**	.63**	.15
Individual Mindfulness		1	.55**	.57**	.42**	.53**	.24
Academic Optimism			1	.92**	.92**	.88**	.14
Collective Efficacy				1	.72**	.77**	.23
Faculty Trust					1	.73**	.12
Academic Emphasis						1	.02
Socio Economic Status							1

Notes: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To glean more information, multiple regression analyses were used to determine the statistical significance of each variable in predicting academic optimism and mindfulness in the academic setting. Multiple regressions show the beta weights (standardized regression coefficients), β (unstandardized regression coefficients), t value, standard error, and significance

of the correlations between the dependent variables and independent variables. Table 7 shows the multiple regression coefficient correlation that examined the relationship of academic optimism with all of the variables in the study with the exception of the sub variables of academic optimism. The sub variables of academic optimism were correlated separately. This information confirms the strength and significance of the two central variables of mindfulness and academic optimism with SES. This correlation reveals that mindfulness (school) is a strong predictor of academic optimism even when SES is taken into consideration ($\beta = .68, p < .01$). Mindfulness as a significant predictor of academic optimism is one of the most critical results of this study. As with previous correlations, SES has little or no effect on academic optimism ($\beta = -.05, p > .01$). In this analysis, the three predictors account for 38% of the variance in academic optimism.

Table 7

Regression Coefficient of Academic Optimism on Mindfulness, Individual Mindfulness, and SES

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	β	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig
(constant)	1.36	.56		2.42	.020
Mindfulness	.613	.22	.68	2.79	.008
Individual Mindfulness	-.029	.174	-.04	-.167	.869
SES	-.001	.003	-.05	-.356	.724

** Significant at $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed), $R = .654$, $adj R^2 = .38$

As the reader will see in further discussion of the hypotheses, multiple regression correlations were calculated to gain further information in regard to the hypotheses that were formulated for this study. These correlations examined the simultaneous combination of the variables in regard to mindfulness and academic optimism to determine the extent (effect size) of these independently potentially influential constructs. Effect size is the magnitude of the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable (Hoy, 2010, p. 59).

Hypotheses Testing

In this research study, there were four hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) predicted a positive relationship, stating the greater the organizational (school) mindfulness than the greater degree of academic optimism in the school. The linear correlation evidence supported this hypothesis. The Pearson correlation was $r = .65, p < .01$. Additional information was gathered by conducting a multiple regression correlation to help determine the magnitude of the relationship between each of the sub variables of academic optimism and mindfulness. To strengthen the possibility of an authentic relationship not by chance, mindfulness was used as the dependent variable and the sub variables of academic optimism were the independent variables (i.e. reversal). The results are seen in Table 8. In this analysis, the predictors account for 45% of the variance. In this regression correlation, the strongest predictor of mindfulness of the three components of academic optimism was collective efficacy ($\beta = .49, p < .01$). Collective efficacy is the belief that teachers have about themselves and the entire faculty to positively affect student achievement (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). A characteristic that is common to both mindfulness and collective efficacy, specifically in which a leader can develop and implement, is deference to expertise. Deference to expertise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015) is putting respect of knowledge into play in an organization. A leader must know their staff, believe in their staff and seek help from the staff members who have the best answers, no matter what. This practice can strengthen the collective efficacy amongst a faculty. Following collective efficacy as a predictor was academic emphasis ($\beta = .31, p < .01$). Academic emphasis is the attention a school puts on achievement, academic performance and student work, often revealing itself through celebrations and honors' assemblies. The idea that academic emphasis is a positive predictor for mindfulness is understandable. For a school leader and staff to have a sincere focus on achievement, there

would need to be to intentional planning and fore-thought which would reinforce a culture of mindfulness.

Table 8

Regression Coefficient of Organizational Mindfulness on Collective Efficacy, Faculty Trust, and Academic Emphasis

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	β	Std. Error	β	t	Sig
(constant)					
Collective Efficacy	.448	.185	.49	2.43	.021
Faculty Trust	-.064	.154	-.08	-.413	.682
Academic Emphasis	.473	.316	.31	1.49	.143

** Significant at $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed), $R = .49$ Adj $R^2 = .45$

The second hypothesis (H2) tested the relationship between the school leader's individual mindfulness and academic optimism. It stated that the greater the school leader's mindfulness (individual), the greater the overall school's academic optimism. The indication that this hypothesis is correct is the Pearson correlation of $r = .55$, $p < .01$. As with hypothesis one, a reversal of variables was done to truly look at the relationship of the variables. Table 9 shows the results of a regression analyses performed to examine the relationship of the variables of academic optimism with the individual mindfulness of the school leader. In unison with the analysis related to hypothesis one, collective efficacy is the strongest predicting factor ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$) for individual mindfulness (of the principal) which directly impacts school mindfulness.

Table 9

Regression Coefficient of Individual Mindfulness on Collective Efficacy, Faculty Trust, and Academic Emphasis

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	β	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig
(constant)	1.3	.85		1.49	.144
Collective Efficacy	.48	.27	.41	1.78	.084
Faculty Trust	.08	.23	-.07	-.350	.729
Academic Emphasis	.54	.46	.27	1.175	.248

** Significant at $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed), $R = .35$, $\text{adj } R^2 = .29$

Both hypotheses (H1 and H2) have been supported with all of the variables having significant positive linear correlations (Table 6). However, it is imperative to note that when the multiple regression analyses were run, faculty trust was demonstrated to not be a significant predictor of organizational (school) mindfulness ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .01$) and individual (principal) mindfulness ($\beta = -.07$, $p < .01$) mimicked the same result. In contrast with previous research on school mindfulness and faculty trust, there is a weak relationship demonstrated through these research results. Both research inquiries used the same instrument for assessment. With such an obvious contradiction regarding a powerful construct which has been proven essential to successful school leadership (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Tarter, Bliss & Hoy, 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, 2014), future research is warranted.

Hypothesis three (H3) stated that all of the variables of organizational mindfulness, individual mindfulness, collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis will have a positive impact on academic optimism. In addition to academic optimism ($r = .65$, $p < .01$) as whole entity, the Pearson correlation demonstrated positive correlations between school mindfulness with collective efficacy ($r = .68$, $p < .01$); faculty trust ($r = .50$, $p < .01$), and academic emphasis ($r = .63$, $p < .01$) proving this hypothesis to be accurate.

Hypothesis four (H4) stated that the variable of socio-economic status (SES) of the school will have a significant impact on mindfulness and academic optimism of the school. As previously mentioned, the socioeconomic status (SES) was measured by each school's free and reduced lunch data. The data showed there was a minimal positive correlation between socio-economic status (SES) and each of the other variables in the study. This supports previous researchers' arguments that despite SES, there are specific leadership practices related to mindfulness and academic optimism practices that assist a school in becoming more effective. Implications regarding those possibilities will be discussed later in chapter five.

Summary

This chapter presented results from this investigation which examined academic optimism in regards to mindfulness in the school setting and purposely exposed any connection of individual mindfulness of the school leader with academic optimism. Effective schools reflect high levels of academic optimism and organizational mindfulness. With the initial correlations showing strong, significant relationships between all variables (with the exception of SES), it is worthwhile to pursue the implementation of mindfulness and academic optimism practices into the day-to-day operations of schooling as well as continue research on these important constructs.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

This study explored the relationship of mindfulness and academic optimism in the school setting with purposeful inclusion of any results that impact school leadership. The research questions that guided this inquiry probed the relationship and significance between the following variables: school (organizational) mindfulness and academic optimism; principal (individual) mindfulness and the academic optimism of the school; and the impact of socio-economic status (SES) on the academic optimism and mindfulness of the school. This chapter summarizes the purpose and findings of this investigation. Theoretical application is offered for further development of the constructs overall as well as practical application for administrators to use when contemplating methods to make schools more effective for students and staff. Recommendations for further research are included within this chapter.

Summary of Findings

This research examined the relationship between mindfulness, both organizational and individual, and academic optimism which includes the subsets of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis. In the analysis, efforts were made to answer the three research questions that were proposed at the inception of this study to provide solutions for school leaders to successfully address the enormous responsibilities needed to strengthen student learning in schools. Discussion of the three hypotheses follows this discussion of research questions. The

first question asked about the overall relationship between school's organizational mindfulness and the academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust and academic emphasis) of the school. The data analysis demonstrates a positive relationship between the constructs of school mindfulness and academic optimism, and the sub-variables involved in this investigation with the exception of SES. This exploration confirms previous research (Sims, 2011) which states that mindfulness and academic optimism are positively correlated and have meaningful impact on student success in school.

The second question asked about the relationship of the principal's individual mindfulness on the academic optimism of the school. The positive correlation between the concepts of principal mindfulness and academic optimism strengthens the belief that the school leader plays an instrumental part of the school's overall success. These findings contribute to previous research which indicated effective leadership practices in regard to student learning are second only to classroom instruction among all school- related causes that contribute to what students learn at school (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Kearney, Kelsey and Herrington's (2013) research studies mindful leaders and highly effective schools resulting in evidence that shows a principal's mindfulness matters (p. 331). With this research information, these constructs add to the tools that can be used by leaders in overall school improvement efforts to increase academic learning. In addition, the power of these two practices in relationship to leadership is that both can be learned. Principals do not always begin being mindful but they can learn by listening to experienced administrators and teachers. They become more mindful by modeling experimentation, reflecting on effective practices and for looking for ways to break down barriers to learning (Kearney, Kelsey & Herrington, 2013). Principals can encourage and develop academic optimism among staff by modeling the characteristics related to

benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. School leaders can learn to be patient and take risks, and continually look for ways to break down barriers to learning which will in turn unlock the doors to greater success (Hoy, 2013, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). This replication study confirmed the potential of mindfulness and academic optimism for improving schools.

The third question inquired about the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and the academic optimism and mindfulness of the school. The research analysis showed there was a minimal positive correlation between socio economic status (SES) and academic optimism ($r=.14, p >.01$) and school (organizational) mindfulness ($r=.15, p >.01$). This supports previous research findings (Gage, 2003; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006) which demonstrate that socioeconomic status does not impact educational practice at significant levels. Given that a school's SES status is not something a school leader can change or control, the opportunity for improvement lies in the fact that school leader can play an essential part in the effective school equation, by not only practicing individual mindfulness, but also by promoting the concept of school mindfulness and all of the characteristics of academic optimism within the school and amongst the school's students and faculty. With the prospect of enhancing school effectiveness and create real positive change in any school, anywhere, without having to consider the socio-economic status creates fruitful possibilities for school leaders because what were previously thought to be important variables in school effectiveness are diminished.

Theoretical Implications

This researcher examined mindfulness in regard to academic optimism in the school setting with purposeful intent to show all connections to school leadership. Overall, the research

results showed that there is a strong positive correlation between mindfulness and academic optimism regardless of socioeconomic factors. The following hypothesized findings from this study demonstrate the connectedness of each of the variables when contemplating practices that can positively affect school leadership.

1. The greater the degree of the school's organizational mindfulness, the greater the degree of the school's academic optimism.
2. The degree of the principal's individual mindfulness is strengthened by two sub variables of academic optimism: collective efficacy and academic emphasis.
3. The variables of organizational mindfulness, collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis have a positive relationship with academic optimism.

The first hypothesis (H1) is supported by the outcomes from this study which demonstrated that the greater the degree of a school's (organizational) mindfulness, the greater the degree of the school's academic optimism. When school leaders and teachers exhibit organizational mindfulness, which is, but not limited to practicing an open, creative, multi-perspective state of being, there can be true gains of the school's academic optimism. Highly mindful organizations constantly confront the unexpected and operate with consistency and effectiveness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). The results show a strong and significant relationship between these two constructs ($r = .55, p < .01$) within the academic setting. The results of this replication study have made it truly worthwhile to contemplate implementing the intentional practice of mindfulness and academic optimism in our schools so that there can be true growth while diminishing the apparent power of SES.

The second hypothesis (H2) stated that the greater the school leader's individual mindfulness, the stronger the school's academic optimism, and the hypothesis is positively

supported by the results of this study ($r=.55, p < .01$). School leaders can intentionally practice daily habits of mindfulness that help mold them into high-impact instructional leaders. Mindful leaders maintain a combination of high alertness, flexibility and adaptability--managing the unexpected with the ease of addressing formal organizational goals (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). An example of this is for the leader to create a culture that welcomes errors, where a leader shares what he or she has learned from errors and creates a risk-free environment that all stakeholders can learn from conducting this type of practice without risk of failure or ridicule (Hattie, 2015; Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006). Mindfulness joins this optimistic belief system with the power of possibility through maintaining positive attitudes, ideas, and beliefs (Langer, 2009).

Hypothesis three (H3) stated that the variables of individual and school mindfulness, collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis have a positive relationship with academic optimism. The preliminary research demonstrated through the linear correlations that the all five independent variables--collective efficacy ($r=.92, p < .01$), faculty trust ($r=.92, p < .01$), and academic emphasis ($r=.88, p < .01$) with individual ($r=.55, p < .01$) and organizational mindfulness ($r=.65, p < .01$)--have a strong correlation with all of the segments of academic optimism. When the multiple regression analysis was performed, these results supported the hypothesis with the exception of the principal's individual mindfulness ($\beta = -.04, p < .01$). Each of these components is unified by sharing the underlying thread of optimism. This supports previous research which found academic optimism as a powerful force viewing teachers as capable, students as willing, parents as supportive, and most of all the school leader as the driver to forge a climate that targets academic success as the basic goal (Hoy & Miscall, 2013; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). The elements of trust and collective efficacy share the nature of optimism with trust requiring faith in others and efficacy being embodied in a positive outlook

(Hoy, 2012) and academic emphasis gives collective optimism in the school with a focus on academics (Hoy, 2012, p.84).

School mindfulness was directly supported by the individual mindfulness of the school principal ($r=.85, p < .01$). Therefore, in examining the relationship of school mindfulness and each of the components of academic optimism, the paradigm of mindfulness will be discussed as a whole construct. This research indicates that mindfulness has a meaningful positive relationship with academic optimism and that when practiced collectively both constructs can assist a school leader in creating a more effective school. Each component of academic optimism has an independent positive relationship with mindfulness.

Collective efficacy and mindfulness have a strong positive correlation ($r=.72, p < .01$) and share many of the same traits that have an optimistic influence on schools. This supports previous research (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006) that suggested without a strong, positive sense of self-efficacy amongst the students and staff, the likeliness of the development of a solid sense collective efficacy within the school will not occur. Collective efficacy is the shared perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p.191). Bandura's (1997) representations of collective efficacy are *mastery experiences* (creating new responses when needed), *vicarious experiences* (people model others similar to themselves), *social persuasion* (strengthening people's beliefs), and *physiological and emotional state* (enhance physical status, reduce stress, and correct misconceptions of bodily states). Qualities of collective efficacy closely resemble many of the characteristics which reflect mindfulness in the school setting, with some of the most obvious being *commitment to resilience* (creating new responses when something goes wrong) and *focus on mistakes and failure* (enhance physical status, reduce stress and negative emotional

tendencies, and correct misconceptions of bodily states). Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci, and Kilinc (2012) argued that a teacher's self-efficacy plays an intermediary role between instructional leadership and collective teacher efficacy; as a result the self and collective efficacy of teachers increase depending on the leadership they perceive (p.2500). Mindfulness and collective efficacy call for school leaders to assess failures and see them as a positive, to model optimism, and encourage their staff to pursue academic excellence.

Faculty trust, the second factor of academic optimism, had a positive relationship with school mindfulness ($r=.50, p < .01$). Unlike the other two sub variables, trust had the least connection with school mindfulness, with no predicted significance. With this research not showing a clear path between the two variables, further research would be warranted as school trust is viewed as critical to successful interpersonal relations, leadership, teamwork, and effective school operations (Hoy, 2012, p.78). Trust, like mindfulness, provides a setting in which people are not afraid of breaking new ground, taking risks, and making errors. Trust involves making oneself vulnerable to another in confidence knowing the other will act in ways that are not detrimental to the trusting party (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 240). Mindful schools develop open and trusting relationships between administrators and teachers. By encouraging faculty to play with ideas, create novelty in their classrooms, feel safe while taking reasonable risks, experiment, and be resilient, the principal can have a profound effect on school mindfulness (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006, p. 253). When teachers trust their students, and they believe that their students are respectful, honest, reliable, open, and competent, teachers are more likely to create a learning environment that facilitates academic optimism and mindfulness (Hoy et al., 2006) and in turn, mindfulness reinforces trust (Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006, p. 251). When analyzing linear correlation, this research endeavor supports previous research (Hoy &

Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006; Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2014) which states that trust is an element that is essential for a school to be effective.

Like the other sub variables, mindfulness and academic emphasis, have a strong positive relationship ($r=.63, p < .01$). Academic emphasis is the degree to which a school is determined to achieve high academic achievement and overall student success. The positive correlation between mindfulness and academic emphasis offers school leaders deliberate tactics which can be implemented in schools that strive to be more academically focused.

Hypothesis four (H4) examined the impact of socio-economic status (SES) of the school on mindfulness and academic optimism of the school. The information gained from the study from using socio-economic status (SES) as a control variable in looking at the relationship with school mindfulness ($r= .15, p > .01$) and academic optimism ($r= .14, p > .01$) shows that influence of socio-economic status was minimal. This outcome does strengthen the argument that a school can be deemed effective no matter who is being taught, in what neighborhood the school resides, its student population, or the amount of resources provided as long as the people involved practice mindfulness coupled with academic optimism (collective efficacy, faculty trust and academic emphasis). In support of this researcher's findings, Gage (2003) argued in his research involving mindfulness that collective teacher efficacy, enabling school structure, and trust were not significantly related to SES. Socio-economic status having little effect on the mindfulness or the academic optimism of an organization is valuable information when seeking practices that can create effective schools without much reliance on socioeconomic status. Hattie (2009) supports this notion with his meta-analysis of numerous research investigations examining SES and school achievement. His findings stated that SES is more influential in the

early years and pre-school. Contrary to these findings, Sims (2011) stated SES in combination with mindfulness showed to be a strong predictor of academic optimism. Obviously, further investigation targeting SES with relationship to mindfulness and academic optimism is warranted due to the fact that there has been contradictory evidence from different research endeavors regarding these constructs. Both quantitative and qualitative studies might prove fruitful in examining what relationships may or may not exist and how school leaders, staff, and students perceive these issues. As noted previously, this replication study has made it worthwhile to contemplate implementing the intentional practice of mindfulness and academic optimism in schools so that there can be true growth in school effectiveness while diminishing the apparent power of SES.

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Additional Information

In this research study, the majority of the schools were above average based on the academic optimism scores, as represented in Table 3. There is a great likelihood that these above average schools skewed the results of this study. These above average schools have faculty members who share the beliefs of academic optimism. In addition, a majority of the schools in this study share average to above average scores on the practice of mindfulness. Table 4 represents the total distribution of mindfulness scores for the schools. With a majority of the schools of all three school districts, located in Alabama State Board of Education District 8 in North Alabama, having optimistically positive responses to the surveys, further research involving school systems located in diverse geographical locations would be warranted. In addition, an investigation comparing attitudes and practices of appointed and elected superintendents and the schools in their districts in regards to academic optimism and effective

schools might provide valuable information for local governments and citizens, given that the three participating school districts had appointed superintendents.

Practical Implications

Both constructs, mindfulness and academic optimism, have established strategies that can deliberately be merged and developed into a structured implementation method to create, develop, and maintain an effective school and offer administrators processes that consistently support student learning in schools. With that understanding and the documentation from previous research and the results of this study, as independent practices mindfulness and academic optimism can contribute genuine value in enabling school leaders to be more effective in the day-to-day operations that can directly affect academic achievement. Both constructs share the characteristic of optimism. The term optimism itself suggests learning possibilities; a pessimistic school atmosphere can change. Faculty can learn to be optimistic. Administrators and teachers have reason to be optimistic--they are empowered to make a difference. Neither the faculty nor their students have to be irretrievably trapped by socio-economic factors that breed a sense of hopelessness and cynicism (Hoy & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2013, p. 315). Clearly, it would be beneficial to provide professional development for school leaders to learn the practices regarding academic optimism and mindfulness. To increase the desire of school leaders to obtain this information, an in-depth, practical, and meaningful professional development activity that allows for the earning of a Alabama Council for Leadership and Development (ACLD) PLU (Professional Learning Unit) needs to be developed and offered. Principals who must complete PLUs and a careful design of instruction (not a predetermined program to be followed) demonstrating ways to effect mindfulness and academic optimism in schools could very well prove to be more effective school leaders.

For academic optimism to be established in a teachable form through professional development, each of the three underlying concepts is better understood when explained through tangible explanations of each property. Found throughout previous research, Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk-Hoy (2006) provide strategies to promote academic optimism in schools. A few of the strategies discussed to obtain academic optimism are paraphrased as follows:

School leaders move schools by example. They must model success and encourage teachers to believe in themselves and their capabilities.

Celebrations need to be held that recognize students and faculty for excellence in achievement and academics (national honor societies).

School faculties must be encouraged to implement innovative programs which promote successful practices in facilitating student learning.

Formal and informal exchanges are promoted between teachers and parents. Events are held regularly that foster teacher and parent relationships such as parent conferences or parents meetings; parent volunteer opportunities are encouraged so parents feel welcome in the school building; and staff are asked to attend student activities such as athletic events or school plays to build genuine relationships.

Leaders can be deliberate in creating vicarious learning situations by emulating successful programs or school activities already being implemented in other schools deemed effective (*fake it until you make it* mentality).

Partner novice teachers with positive mentors so that they experience optimistic approaches to teaching rather than be informally exposed to the sense of hopelessness sometimes conveyed in teacher lounges and school hallways.

Building on the processes regarding academic optimism, Langer (1989), Weick and Sutcliffe (2007), and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' (2015) established methods to learn mindfulness in regard to leadership skills. Weick and Sutcliffe's original organizational mindfulness processes have been refined to so they can be put into action on a larger platform as well (2015). Weick and Sutcliffe's FSORE principles (2015) of organizational mindfulness guidelines are:

One: *Preoccupation with Failure* (scrutinize small failures) captures the need for continuous attention to abnormalities that could be symptoms of larger problems in the system. (p. 46)

Two: *Reluctance to Simplify* (refine the categories imposed) generates mindful organizing because it disallows for creating generalizations, types and categories which can conceal incongruous details. (p. 64)

Three: *Sensitivity to Operations* (watch what you are doing and what emerges) is about the work itself, seeing what we are actually doing regardless of intentions, designs and plans. (p.79)

Four: *Commitment to Resilience* (make do with resources you have) is a combination of keeping small errors small, of improvising work-arounds that keep the system functioning, and of absorbing change while persisting. (p. 96)

Five: *Deference to Expertise* (listen to the person who knows the best solution) is seen in reliable systems that organize so that problems attract and create their own hierarchies that often impose unanticipated solutions. (p.124)

It is important to note that for a school to be practicing organizational mindfulness, it must be high functioning and effective, maintain a practice of core beliefs, and observe local norms to make denial and neglect difficult (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015, p.147). The positive outcome of this research encourages the joining of academic optimism practices with mindfulness strategies to develop professional development formats assisting administrators in developing effective leadership practices. Clearly one of the most powerful aspects of engaging the idea of developing professional development around these constructs is that there is no cost to begin implementation of these practices beyond the costs of developing and offering the PLU.

The information from this study will only have an effect on schools if it is shared. The researcher will communicate the findings through a summary report for dissemination to administrators and teachers in the school systems that participated in the study as well as Mary Scott Hunter, the State School Board member who assisted with the survey portion of the research. Further possibilities to relay this information is to obtain ACLD approval for a PLU

relating to professional development opportunities related to this information. Optimistically, I hope to share this information at state administrator meetings and conferences to include presentations at the Alabama State Department of Education Mega Conference in Mobile, Alabama.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study contributes to the significant theoretical and empirical findings for past that impact school leadership, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement: it also offers a basis for future studies on these issues. The belief and practice of mindfulness and academic optimism in the academic setting to create and maintain a successful school is an exciting proposition. Not only is it something that can be implemented by school leadership but it is extremely cost-effective for organizations that have little professional development monies. The constructs are not “canned” programs to add to the already full plate of teachers but these are beliefs and practices that can be learned, developed and applied throughout the day-to-day operation of schooling at all levels. The underlying property that strengthens these constructs is academic optimism. Administrators and teachers have reason to be optimistic, and as a result they can be empowered to make a difference. Neither the faculty members nor their students have to be irretrievably trapped by socioeconomic factors that breed a sense of hopelessness and cynicism (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p.198).

A quantitative study alone brings limitations. Future research involving a mixed method approach to examine effective leadership practices involving both of these constructs collectively would prove advantageous and give a more robust justification with their positive correlation. A mixed method study would provide more specific strategies and detailed practices which offer

leaders real solutions to becoming being more mindful and academically optimistic. Future studies mixing quantitative and qualitative research would give a voice to what the practices actually look like when actively used in the school setting –this could strengthen just looking at numbers and make it tangible.

When examining the results from the regression analysis that considered the relationship between the sub variables of academic optimism and mindfulness, collective efficacy and academic emphasis show a medium to high strength for statistical power. It would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study to identify characteristics of these two components with mindfulness in effective schools. Research would allow for more examples of methods to be investigated and fleshed out that couple mindfulness and academic optimism. There is power in joining the two constructs in a fashion that school leaders can adopt to create a more academically sound school with the assurance of greater success without the burden of additional cost. It is important to note that in previous studies, it has been shown that strong academic optimism positively effects student achievement (Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). Therefore, another suggestion for future research is to examine the relationship between organizational (school) mindfulness and academic achievement with the inclusion of socio-economic status used as an additional consideration.

It was not a part of a research question for this particular study but as the disaggregated data in Chart 3 indicate, there is substantial difference between elementary and high school teachers' responses regarding academic optimism. In the average to below average academically optimistic schools, the participants taught in the 9th to 12th grade and in the substantially above average academically optimistic schools, the participants worked in grades kindergarten to 5th grade. This indicates that there are differences in academic optimism depending on the grade

level of student; the elementary teachers are more positive than the secondary teachers. Given the several research studies focusing on academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, Bankole, Mitchell & Moore, 2012), it would be valuable to build on these studies and conduct a mixed method or qualitative study to find the reasons to why this is a prominent difference. Future research that addresses the possibility of these differences in different locations could provide feedback that could assist high school leaders in methods to change the perceptions and practices of their teachers to create a more academically optimistic setting for students.

The importance of both trust and mindfulness in schools is undeniable. They are inextricably related, and both create a climate for success (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006, p. 252). In addition, as previously mentioned, the need for further study to examine the relationship between trust and school mindfulness would be beneficial. Trust, like mindfulness, is a multifaceted construct and challenging to define. A quantitative study examining these two constructs is a good inaugural vehicle to learn more about this vital relationship but it is not enough. Trust is a complex entity that is essential for positive and meaningful interactions which occur beyond the walls of educational settings. A qualitative study would provide the necessary exploration and understanding of the relationship between trust and individual and mindfulness -individual and organizational-specifically in regards to school leadership.

Conclusion

Mindfulness and academic optimism are clearly important concepts for educators to imbed in the daily practices of school life. Hattie sums up my view with his statement that excellence is attainable (education): there are many instances of excellence, some of them are

fleeting, some of them are aplenty (Hattie, J., 2009). With the incorporation of strategies surrounding these two constructs, excellence in any school can happen. For school leaders the intentional practice of mindfulness should be an everyday occurrence. There should be strategic practices to intentionally share this academic optimism and mindfulness research with staff at the school and district level to develop a common language when talking about students, student learning and our school operations.

For example, as virtual schools continue to be popularized and incorporated in common educational practices, several challenges continue to surface that relate to these constructs. How will mindfulness and academic optimism look on a digital platform? How do school leaders develop collective efficacy, faculty trust, and academic emphasis when some staff members and students which have never step a foot into the brick and mortar building? How is trust, collective efficacy and academic emphasis developed across digital platform? How will an on-line student and on-line teacher who have never met each other engage with each other? Trust is one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable and competent (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). What does that look like in a digital world? For a school leader, all of these variables are important to contemplate as they develop strategies to address the increased pressure to provide a guarantee that graduates from Alabama high schools are adequately prepared for college and career opportunities. The impact of this research for has forever changed how I view daily tasks at school, particularly given I am a principal of a virtual/blended K-12 public school. All of the variables involved in this study are essential to being a better school leader as the constructs of mindfulness and academic optimism, specifically collective efficacy and trust, seep into every interaction I have with other people in my school setting.

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APPENDIX A
Academic Optimism and Mindfulness Surveys

Academic Optimism Survey

1.

Please indicate your degree of with each of the statements about your school from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Your answers are confidential.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	<input type="radio"/>					
If a child doesn't want to learn teacher here give up.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful results.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.	<input type="radio"/>					
These students come to school ready to learn.	<input type="radio"/>					
Home life provides so many advantages that students are bound to learn.	<input type="radio"/>					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students here just aren't motivated to learn.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.	<input type="radio"/>					
The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.	<input type="radio"/>					
Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.	<input type="radio"/>					
Drug and alcohol abuse in this community make learning difficult for students here.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers in this school trust their students.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers in this school trust the parents.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students in this school care about each other.	<input type="radio"/>					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students in this school can be counted upon to do their work.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers can count upon parental support.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers here believe that students are competent learners.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers can believe what parents tell them.	<input type="radio"/>					
Students here are secretive.	<input type="radio"/>					

2.

Please indicate the degree to which the following statements characterize your school from Rarely Occurs to Very Often Occurs. Your answers are confidential.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
The school sets high standards for performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students respect others who get good grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students seek extra work so they can get good grades.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students try hard to improve on previous work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The learning environment is orderly and serious.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The students in this school can achieve the goals that have been set for them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers in this school believe that their students have the ability to achieve academically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Mindfulness Survey

3.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers in this school value expertise more than authority.	<input type="radio"/>					
Mistakes are seen as important sources of information.	<input type="radio"/>					
When a crisis occurs the principal deals with it so we can get back to teaching.	<input type="radio"/>					
In this school teachers welcome feedback about ways to improve.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers negotiate differences among each other without destroying the diversity of opinions.	<input type="radio"/>					
My principal does not really know what is happening in most classrooms.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers do not trust the principal enough to admit their mistakes.	<input type="radio"/>					
The principal of this school does not value the opinions of the teachers.	<input type="radio"/>					
My principal is an expert on teaching and learning.	<input type="radio"/>					
My principal jumps to conclusions.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers in this school jump to conclusions.	<input type="radio"/>					
People in this school respect power more than knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In times of crisis, it takes my principal too much time to effectively deal with the situation.	<input type="radio"/>					
Teachers in my building learn from their mistakes and change so they do not happen again.	<input type="radio"/>					
My principal negotiates faculty difference without destroying the diversity of opinions.	<input type="radio"/>					
Too many teachers in my building give up when things go bad.	<input type="radio"/>					
The principal welcomes challenges from teachers.	<input type="radio"/>					
When things don't go well, teachers bounce back quickly.	<input type="radio"/>					
Most teachers in this building are reluctant to change.	<input type="radio"/>					
In my building, teachers hide mistakes.	<input type="radio"/>					

Demographics

* 4. What is the name of your school?

* 5. How many years have you taught at this school?

- 1-3
- 4-10
- 11 -15
- 16 - 20
- 21 or more

6. What grade(s) do you teach?

- K-2nd Grade
- 3rd - 5th Grade
- 6th - 8th Grade
- 9th - 12th Grade
- Other Certified Position
- Other Non-Certified Position

7. Are you male or female?

- Female
- Male

8. What is your age?

- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or older

9. What is the highest degree you have received?

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Educational Specialist Degree
- Doctoral Degree (EdD/PhD)
- Other (please specify)

APPENDIX B
Superintendent Correspondence

(Superintendent's Name)
(Address)

(Date)

Dear (Superintendent's Name),

My name is Joanna Dowdle May, and I am the Principal of the Renaissance School in the Athens City Schools System. Having completed all of my requirements for doctoral course work in Educational Leadership at the University of Alabama, I am in the dissertation stage and seeking assistance from selected Alabama District 8 school districts to complete my research. My research is looking at the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism in regards to school leadership.

Mindfulness is the capability to see any situation from several perspectives using a creative, open, and probabilistic state of mind (Langer, 1993) and the *academic optimism* of a school is the collective belief of teachers that the faculty can teach, their students can learn, and parents are supporters (Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). As the need for effective leadership practices continues to grow with educational demands, the practice of mindfulness and academic optimism increases.

My research involves a survey that will be distributed to each of your schools for each of your certified staff to complete. The survey contains questions regarding mindfulness and academic optimism. If you choose to allow your teachers to participate, a link for the surveys will be emailed directly you or your school district designee. To reduce the possibility for SPAM issues, I would prefer for the emails to be sent through your district email system to school sites.

Completion of the survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. It will be explained to your teachers that participation is strictly voluntary, and results specific to individuals or specific schools are confidential. It would be desirable for as many teachers as possible at each school site to participate for increased validity. The survey will be completed during the month of January. Prior to sending the email containing the survey link, I will send you an email requesting who you would like for me to work with in your district.

I am respectfully requesting your assistance in this endeavor. Your school district's input is vital to the success of this research project. At that time, if you have any questions you can email me.

Thank you so much for your time and assistance in this matter.

Educationally yours,
Joanna Dowdle May

APPENDIX C
Principal Email

(Date)

Dear (Principal's Name),

My name is Joanna May, and I am Principal of the Renaissance School in the Athens City Schools System. Having completed all of my requirements for doctoral course work in Educational Leadership at the University of Alabama, I am in the dissertation stage and seeking assistance from selected school districts in Alabama State Board of Education District 8 located in Northern Alabama to complete my research. My research is looking at the relationship between mindfulness and academic optimism.

My research involves a survey that will be distributed your schools teachers for completion. The survey contains questions regarding mindfulness and academic optimism.

Mindfulness is the capability to see any situation from several perspectives using a creative, open, and probabilistic state of mind (Langer, 1993) and the *academic optimism* of a school is the collective belief of teachers that the faculty can teach, their students can learn, and parents are supporters (Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006). As the need for effective leadership practices continues to grow with educational demands, the practice of mindfulness and academic optimism increases.

Completion of the survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. It will be explained to your teachers that participation is strictly voluntary, and results specific to individuals or specific schools are confidential. It would be desirable for as many teachers as possible at each school site to participate for increased validity.

Your superintendent has given permission for conduct this research at your school. A district-wide email will be sent to your certified staff during the month of January.

If you have any questions regarding this survey please don't hesitate to contact me by email joanna.may@acs-k12.org.

Thank you for your time and assistance in this matter.

Educationally yours,

Joanna Dowdle May

APPENDIX D
Teacher Correspondence

First Attempt

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTIONS PROGRAM**

Good morning! I am Joanna May, Principal Investigator from the University of Alabama, and I am conducting a study called The Effects of Individual and School Mindfulness on the Academic Optimism in Schools in North Alabama. I wish to find out what effect mindful leaders (who pay attention to both successes and failures) have on the academic optimism of teachers (confidence in their ability, and the school's ability, to engage students in learning).

Taking part in this study involves completing a web survey that will take about 20 minutes. This survey contains questions about mindfulness and academic optimism.

We will protect your confidentiality by having no individual information revealed on the reports generated; only school-level data are reported. Only the investigator will have access to the data. The data are encrypted, and only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you, with the possible exception of implementation of strategies to improve mindfulness in your school or school district. The findings will be useful to school leaders and teachers for improving schools' effectiveness.

The chief risk is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Joanna May at 256-227-6613 or by email. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ms. Tanta Myles (the University Compliance Officer) at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. If you have complaints or concerns about this study, file them through the UA IRB outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html. Also, if you participate, you are encouraged to complete the short Survey for Research Participants online at this website. This helps UA improve its protection of human research participants.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or stop participating any time before you submit your answers.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to be in this study, click on the CONTINUE button to begin. Thank you very much.

Second Attempt

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTIONS PROGRAM

Good morning! I am Joanna May, Principal Investigator from the University of Alabama, and I am conducting a study called The Effects of Individual and School Mindfulness on the Academic Optimism in Schools in North Alabama. Thank you to all of you who have already taken a few minutes to respond to my survey. This is the second of a total of three attempts for me to have ample participation for my doctoral survey. I wish to find out what effect mindful leaders (who pay attention to both successes and failures) have on the academic optimism of teachers (confidence in their ability, and the school's ability, to engage students in learning).

Taking part in this study involves completing a web survey that will take about 20 minutes. This survey contains questions about mindfulness and academic optimism.

We will protect your confidentiality by having no individual information revealed on the reports generated; only school-level data are reported. Only the investigator will have access to the data. The data are encrypted, and only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you, with the possible exception of implementation of strategies to improve mindfulness in your school or school district. The findings will be useful to school leaders and teachers for improving schools' effectiveness.

The chief risk is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Joanna May at 256-227-6613 or by email. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ms. Tanta Myles (the University Compliance Officer) at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. If you have complaints or concerns about this study, file them through the UA IRB outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html. Also, if you participate, you are encouraged to complete the short Survey for Research Participants online at this website. This helps UA improve its protection of human research participants.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or stop participating any time before you submit your answers.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to be in this study, click on the CONTINUE button to begin. Thank you very much.

Third Attempt

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTIONS PROGRAM

Good morning! I am Joanna May, Principal Investigator from the University of Alabama, and I am conducting a study called The Effects of Individual and School Mindfulness on the Academic Optimism in Schools in North Alabama. Thank you to all of you who have already taken a few minutes to respond to my survey. This is the final time that I am asking that you respond to the survey for my research to obtain my doctorate for the University of Alabama. I wish to find out what effect mindful leaders (who pay attention to both successes and failures) have on the academic optimism of teachers (confidence in their ability, and the school's ability, to engage students in learning).

Taking part in this study involves completing a web survey that will take about 20 minutes. This survey contains questions about mindfulness and academic optimism.

We will protect your confidentiality by having no individual information revealed on the reports generated; only school-level data are reported. Only the investigator will have access to the data. The data are encrypted, and only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you, with the possible exception of implementation of strategies to improve mindfulness in your school or school district. The findings will be useful to school leaders and teachers for improving schools' effectiveness.

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If you have questions about this study, please contact Joanna May at 256-227-6613 or by email. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ms. Tanta Myles (the University Compliance Officer) at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. If you have complaints or concerns about this study, file them through the UA IRB outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html. Also, if you participate, you are encouraged to complete the short Survey for Research Participants online at this website. This helps UA improve its protection of human research participants.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or stop participating any time before you submit your answers.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to be in this study, click on the CONTINUE button to begin. Thank you very much.

APPENDIX E IRP APPROVAL

Office for Research
Office of the Director of
Research Compliance

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
R E S E A R C H

August 15, 2016

Joanna Dowdle May
ELPTS
College of Education
The University of Alabama
Box 870302

Re: IRB # EX-16-CM-075 "The Effects of Individual and School
Mindfulness on the Academic Optimism of Schools in North Alabama"

Dear Ms. May:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.101(b)(2) as outlined below:

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

Your application will expire on August 14, 2017. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.



358 Rose Administration Building
Box 870127
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0127
17051 348-8461